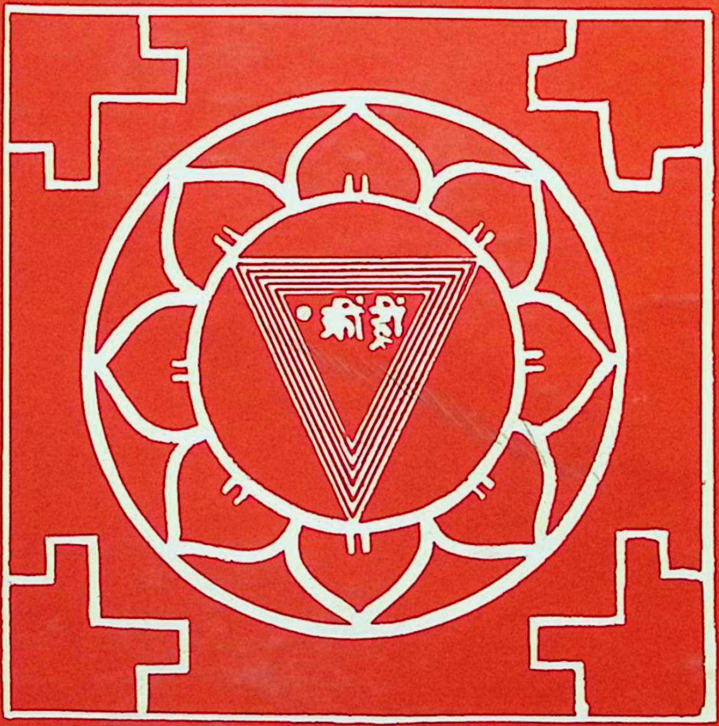
TANTRAS

THEIR PHILOSOPHY

AND OCCULT SECRETS

(WITH CRITICAL INTRODUCTION AND INDEX
REVISED AND ENLARGED)



D.N. BOSE
HIRALAL HALDAR

The Book

The book attempts to place before the reader the broad principles underlying the practices of the Tantric form of religion and to explain the philosophical principles determining the form of worship, the concept of the deity and its fundamental creed. It traces the origin and development of the Tantras through the ages and discusses the scope and special features of Buddhist Tantras with particular reference to the part mysticism plays in the form of Tantric Sādhanā. It describes the Ten Mahāvidyās whom the Tantrics deeply venerate and worship reverently; expounds the ideas behind the concept of these Goddesses and their relationship with one another; explains clearly, with reference to the Tantric texts the meanings of the five makāras which have been misinterpreted by the uninformed; recounts in an elaborate way the Cakra form of worship and its proper significance, citing passages from the various texts on the subject; presents an idea of the greatness of the Deity whom the Tantrics worship with devotion. Above all, it discusses several preliminary steps to yoga practice which lead to the penultimate state of Samādhi and the physical processes adopted for the control of breath.

The book is documented with Preface, Critical Introduction, Glossary and Index.

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PREFACE

India is a birthplace of religion. Religious preachers and reformers appeared from time to time in this country and gave new shapes and forms to religion according to the needs of time for the benefit of the people. Thus arose Śaivism, Śāktism, Vaiṣṇavism and Tantrism in this country.

The subject of the Tantras is very abstruse. It is full of mysticism and it consists of mystic rites and ritual. The texts on the subject are numerous. Some of these deal with mystic rites, while others deal with time processes and places of worship.

The book is designed to place before the reader the broad principles underlying the practice of the Tantric form of religion and to explain the philosophical principles determining its forms of worship: the conception of the deity and its fundamental creed. Among the special features of the book may be mentioned the following : It explains the meanings of the five *makaras* which have been misinterpreted by the uninformed. It explains the Cakra form of worship and its proper significance by quoting different passages from the various texts of different authors on the subject. It presents an idea of the greatness of the deity whom the tantrics worship. Above all, it discusses several preliminary steps to yoga practice leading to the penultimate state of Samādhi, including the physical process adopted for the control of breath. The two new features—a critical introduction and a detailed Index—enhance the value of the present edition of the book.

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INTRODUCTION

Tantra is a Sanskrit word derived from √tan 'to expand'. Tantra will then come to mean all-comprehensive knowledge or expansion of knowledge. It will, of course, include rules and regulations, a system or an administrative code. According to Monier Williams, Tantra is a class of works teaching magic and mystic formulas for the attainment of four aims of life, viz dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa. As the *Śabda-kalpa-druma* kośa remarks, it is a science that deals with the creation and dissolution of the universe, the duties of four varṇas and āśramas, performance of six activities, viz, *māraṇa*, *uccāṭana*, *vaśikaraṇa*, *stambhana*, *śānti* and *Vidveṣaṇa*.

From the definition as given above, it becomes clear that the term tantra signifies a kind of knowledge related to both the spiritual and material aspects of man's life. That is to say, the Tantra-Vidyā aims at the realization of Brahman, the Supreme Being but side by side with this, it advocates courses of discipline for the realization of the less sublime ends of human life such as *artha* (wealth), and *kāma* (passionate love or desire.)

The system is very old. The tantras claim their origin from the Vedas. They contain the essentials of the Vedic sacrifice and the essence of monotheistic philosophy of the Upaniṣads as well as the Bhakti cult propounded in the Purāṇas. They incorporate the yoga method of Patañjali and the mantra element of the Atharvaveda.

The system is, therefore, orthodox. As the illustrious commentator of Manu, Kullūka Bhaṭṭa states, the tāntrika cult is part and parcel of śruti : *Vaidikī Tāntrikī caiva dvividhā* śrutiḥ *Kīrtitā*.

But most of the dialogues in the tantra-sādhanā are related to Śiva and Gaurī in the form of question-answer. The entire tantra philosophy revolves round the worship of Śiva and Śakti which can be traced to pre-Vedic times. The discovery of an idol of Śiva in yaugic posture is a strong evidence in this direction. This shows that the worship of Śiva, the source of all tantras, was current long before the occupation of India by the Aryans. Most scholars are of opinion that the tantrika method of sādhanā was in existence in essence even in very ancient times. It was in vogue widely in all parts of India and its doctrines and precepts even gained circulation beyond the seas and beyond the frontiers. The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* is of this view. According to this tantra it was Śiva who in his infinite mercy for the people spread the tantric form of worship. Thus the association of tantra-vidyā exclusively with the aboriginal deity Śiva would take this science to a hoary antiquity and its inclusion in the Vedic cult would be a factor late in date. The extant tāntrika texts are later in form, though their contents may go to pretty old times.

The tantric religion is as old an any other form of religion. What its primeval form had been is not easy to discover. It must have undergone tremendous changes while passing through the ages. Coming in contact with the Vedic ritual and the Mahāyāna practices of the Buddhists it might have acquired a new shape. In fact the ritual side of the Vedas and the practical kriyas of the Mahāyānists for the attainment of spiritual unfoldment constitute what we designate as the tantras to-day.

As stated above Tantra is a system of knowledge that will be of assistance in realizing the ideal of life. If stands for a code of sādhanā for attaining the knowledge of the self, the twentyfour tattvas, ten senses of perception and action, five prāṇas, mind, buddhi, cit and ahaṁkāra. Besides these, the tantras discuss among other sādhanās, the method of initiation, sitting postures, eightfold path of yoga, worship, meditation and means of achieving siddhis. They have discovered for us the centres of energy known as Cakras in man. They are concerned with the *parā vidyā*, a knowledge of the ultimate reality responsible for the creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe and that will help men tortured by the cycle of births and deaths and burning under the smart of three classes of pain, viz ādhibhautika, ādhyātmika and ādhidaivika.

Tantrism developed through stages. It assumed various forms in ancient and medieval India. Its influence is distinctly visible in the vast Indian literature, both Vedic and Buddhist.

Vedic Tantrism was practised through the cult of sacrifice. A number of sacrificial rites such as Śyena-yāga were performed by the sādhaka for liquidating the enemy. A number of Vedic mantras were applied for the cure of diseases. Vedic formulas were recited for the purpose of pacification, eradication, subjugation and immobilization. Tantrism had entered the vedic premises in full swing. The Vedic ṛṣis wielded occult powers and they could create new heaven for the entrants who were denied their rightful entrance in the heaven of Indra.

Vedic religion was a sacrificial Tantric creed. Tantric rites were held by means of sacrifice attended by animal slaughter, by the caste-ridden Indian society in which the Brahmins played a conspicuous part. Naturally, Śiva and his followers who did not subscribe to the superiority of Brahmins rose up in a body against the cult of sacrifice and started a crusade with the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice. The sacrificial cult thus met a crushing blow at the hands of Śaivites. However, there was a 'compromise. The character of vedic religion underwent a change. But when Śiva was accorded a rightful place in the Aryan heirarchy of gods, Vedic rites of animal sacrifice and soma drinking went on unabated and there was no apparent clash between the Vedic and Śaivite people.

With the advent of Buddhism, however, there came up a second onslaught on the Brahmanical cult of sacrifice. The onslaught was intellectual or idealogical. There were no persecutions or oppressions for Buddha preached a religion of love and nonviolence. Buddhism discarded sacrifice and rebelled against caste. Buddhism adopted the yoga-and-tantra practices of the Śaivites and evolved a neo-tantric ideology represented by the elaborate system of idol-worship Tantrism entered again into the Hindu fold in the form of Vaiṣṇavism. The *Rādhā-tantram* bears distinct marks of tantric influence on the Vaiṣṇava cult.

The Tantras preach the identity of the individual and the absolute in the strain of the Upaniṣads. The Advaitism and Tantrism come closer to each other. Yet there is a world of difference in their method of spiritual realization. The Advaita system recommends the method of transcendent wisdom whereas the Tantra prescribes the method of physical and physiological processes. The Tantras differ from the Sāṁkhya also inasmuch as the Prakṛti and Puruṣa of the Sāṁkhyas are not identifiable with Śiva and Śakti. It differs from philosophy, for it places stress upon a religious faith, worship of a deity, so on and so forth. It is not an old and abstruse thought but an emotional activity that contributes to our spiritual welfare and moral perfection.

Tantrism is very much related to yoga and it deals with practical things. Tantric sādhanā empresses a person with occult powers. In the yoga-darśana, Patañjali speaks of some practical sādhanās which invest a yogi with great yaugic powers. But the Tantric form of worship differs widely from the Upaniṣadic and Puranic principles of worship.

The fundamental creed of the Tantras is worship. Tantras emphasize the motherhood of god. In this creed, the supreme deity is the eternal mother of the universe. Creation is the result of union between Śiva and his Śakti. The two are inseparable and eternally co-existent. No definite form can be attributed to them. Still the aspirant has to create a form congenial to his way of worship. It may be Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa under Vaiṣṇavism, Śiva and Śakti under Śaivism and Śāktism but ultimately they are the conceived forms of the supreme spirit who is formless, infinite and indivisible. The devotee who aspires to reach the goal of Sādhanā has to develop an ardent longing for God. He has to absorb his self in singing the auspicious glories of his cherished deity, reciting the name of God who is a *Rasa* (nectar) and drink it like a bee, sitting on a lotus. It is remarkable to note in this respect that Śrī Caitanya, Rama Prasad and Ram Kṛṣṇa who had realized self in their very life continued to worship the Deity of their adoration as personal Īśvara.

According to Tantra-vidyā the stages of sādhanā are three: the realization of Ātma tattva, Śiva tattva and Śakti tattva. Ultimately they are one. It is only when the self knows through these sādhanās that he is the *aṁśa* of Brahma itself that he becomes one with the Supreme Being and attains the highest stage of spiritual bliss.

The whole of Tantra literature is symbolic. It consists of catch-phrases which were quite intelligible to the people when this science was in vogue. They are very often misunderstood and misinterpreted now when this science has become out of use. We find that most of the terms are the reflections of amorous raptures of the mystic sādhaka whose joys resemble that of a lover meeting his beloved after long waiting. Such terms as madya, māṁsa and matsya are misunderstood by the uninformed who take them literally but they signify some Yaugic practice, vital to the sādhaka (pp. 113ff). There are some cryptic expressions too used in religious worship, some physical processes such as sitting postures (āsanas)—siddha, padma, baddha etc. as also interweaving of fingers (mudrās) such as dhenu, yoni, śaṅkha and mystic practices such as the observance of cakras—deva, rāja, vīra.

India evolved numerous systems of Yoga. A treatise on Tantra Yoga—Vijñāna-bhairava enumerates as many as one hundred and twleve ways of Sādhanā. But for a new aspirant such practices are difficult to follow. For the intelligent grasp of these sādhanās one needs an expert instructor (guru) and such gurus are very rare to find. The aspirant is advised to choose one of the four main yogas, namely, Rāja, Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma. In fact, the three—Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma are the different stages of yaugic practice culminating in Rāja yoga. Hindu Śāstras mention another set of yaugic sādhanā : mantra, haṭha and laya. Pātañjala Yoga Sūtra mentions aṣṭāṅga yoga which generally covers all aspects of yaugic sādhanā.

Hindu Tantra-Vidyā places emphasis upon the knowledge of human nāḍīs, Kośas and Cakras. Its influence is traceable not only in the multitude of sects flourishing in the Hindu fold but it has also entered other spheres such as non-orthodox systems etc. Mahāyāna Buddhism served as a fertile ground for the Tantric seed to grow. Under the Vajrayāna Buddhism, the Tantric creed reached the highest peak. Vajrayāna offered the temptations of *Mahāsukha* which the aspirant was to realize hereafter in the land of Vidyādharas where the lord of heaven would hold a parasol over his head.

CHAPTER 1

AUTHORITY AND ANTIQUITY

It is a common-place belief among the people that anything to be of authoritative character in matters of religion, should have the sanction of ages ; as if authenticity of truth depends upon mere antiquity. Hardly anything new in the domain of religious faith is looked upon with reverence ; nay more, sometimes it is sternly put down as a sacrilegious profanation of sacred truths ! Every pioneer of a new truth, every prophet of a new creed, every reformer of a popular superstition, has to fight against this stolid conservatism of the populace. Sometimes one has to pay with his life for enunciating a new mode of religious approach. Socrates had to drink hemlock, and Christ was crucified for revealing new light to their countrymen. Such is the antipathy of the people against all new doctrines in matters of religion. It takes a long time even for a worn-out creed to die a natural death.

Naturally, there is a feeling of aversion among the Hindus in general to almost every article of faith that is not to be traced to the Vedas, the most venerated and oldest book of revelation to the Hindus. Anything of later date than that of the Vedas is not entitled to that amount of veneration in which even the most unimportant Vedic texts are held ! But this is neither logical nor sound. Hindu religion itself has undergone radical changes in various things since the time of the Vedas. New cases, new problems and new conditions may arise even in matters of religion, which should demand impartial discussion in the light of reason and truth. That the Vedas, considered as the last word on religion and the supreme authority on everything in religious matter, lacked all comprehensiveness is established by the very existence of the Upaniṣads and the Saṁhitās and other ancient Hindu Scriptures which have come after the Vedas.[1]

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[1] In one sense they are regarded so many branches of the Vedas, because they are called Vedāṅgas.

It will therefore be the height of intoleration if one has to plead for an exemption from such a blind veneration for the Vedas, when he has to speak about any new article of faith or any religious creed, or any new form of worship that has no origin in the Vedas. The tense of revelation is not indefinitely past, but infinitely future. It is upon this incontrovertible truth that science, with all its branches, rests. A truth may be revealed in the later age, but that should not be the reason for rejecting it from the domain of truths. Youth is not an atrocious crime in nature, nor should it be so in human affairs. But sometimes an exception is sought in matters of religion from this general scientific principle. But such an attitude of mind is neither rational nor liberal. Catholicity of views is as essential in religion as in science and in other secular matters.

That the Tantras had been in prominence at a later date than that of the Vedas is admitted by all. The origin of the Tantras is given as follows in the Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana by Nalini Kanta Brahma, "The Tantras claim their origin from the Vedas. The Tantric form of *sādhanā* probably came into special prominence when on the one hand, the elaborate details enjoined by the Vedic sacrifices, taking a long time to be performed, could not be accomplished by short-lived people of feeble attainments, and when on the other, the Upaniṣad method of acquisition of transcendent knowledge surpassed the intellects and equipments of most people. The Purāṇas were at this time preaching the *Bhakti* cult in order to place before people an easy method capable of being grasped and followed by all. But these could not reconcile themselves satisfactorily with the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, the accepted and time-honoured authorities, and seemed to promulgate something foreign to them. The Tantras offered themselves to the people at this stage, containing within them the essentials of the Vedic sacrifices and oblations and the essence of the monotheistic philosophy of the Upaniṣads, of the *Bhakti* cult preached by the Purāṇas, of the *yoga* method propounded by Patañjali, and of the *mantra* element of the Atharva veda."

The account given in the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra regarding the popularity of the Tantra form of *sādhanā* also corroborates the above facts, the only significant difference being in the mode of expression. While the one puts the whole thing in Śāstric setting, the other jots down the fact with a philosophical outlook. The Tantras say that in the *Satya yuga* the people followed the Vedic mode of worship which appealed to their sense. The people were devoted to the study of the Vedas, regular meditation, penance, and austerities; they were firm in their vows and observance of religious practices; they were truthful and compassionate; they were of strong physique capable of bearing continued strain; they were of indefatigable energy in propitiating the Devas and the Pitṛs; they performed sacrifices offering oblations to the Deities without fail; they had, above all, their passions under their full control. Every body attended to his duty appertaining to his social order.

With the beginning of the *Treta* age, a change took place in the outlook of the people. They were much less painstaking than their prototypes of the *Satya* age. The Vedic rites seemed to them to be accompanied by too much formalities, whose significance they failed to perceive. At the same time they considered it a dereliction of duty on their part in doing away with the Vedic rites. Smṛtis and Upaniṣads came into existence during this age to satisfy the spiritual hankering of the people and save them from misery and sin.

In the *Dvāpara* age the explanations given in the Smṛtis and the Upaniṣads were beyond the grasp of the common people in the absence of the Ṛṣis of divine vision. Therefore, their influence on the common run of people slackened. Their health also did not permit continued thinking on abstruse philosophical subjects and concentrating their minds on them. They desisted from following the tenets of the Smṛtis. The consequence was the origin of Purāṇas and Saṁhitās to satisfy the intellectual cravings of man.

Finally, the dawning of the *Kali yuga* further worsened the situation. The Vedas, the Smṛtis, the Saṁhitās and even the Purāṇas were as if devoid of their power. The people were undisciplined in their conduct; they were given up to the pursuit of selfish pleasures; they were covetous and without any control over their passions. Moreover, the people were feeble in constitution and short-lived. Śiva, therefore, the God of knowledge, the propounder of all branches of learning, introduced the Tantric form of worship for their rescue from sin. The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra states it in clear language that the Tantric knowledge was not a new thing in the *Kali yuga*. It had been long in existence. It was Śiva who in his infinite mercy for the people spread the Tantric form of worship to uplift mankind from the sinful practices in which they had been steeped. Thus it is evident that Tantric religion, even judging from the point of antiquity, is not of recent origin, but it is as old as any other form of the Vedic religion, although it must be admitted on all hands that formal treatises upon Tantric religion were composed in later times. But the essence of Tantric religion is not so. The great Sanskritist, Kullūka Bhaṭṭa, the illustrious commentator of Manu, has held the Tantras as a part and parcel of the Śruti. He says : "There are two classes of Śruti—Vedic and Tantric."[1]

In the Tenth Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda we get the famous Devī Sūkta. containing hymns to Durgā, another name for Śakti (goddess Kālī), the main Deity of the Tantras and of Tantric faith. Again in the Atharvaveda we meet with many rites and rituals which are quite similar to what we find in the Tantras. These go to support the view that the underlying principles of the Tantras are enshrined in the Vedas as well. The Upaniṣads again contain the seeds of the Tantric form of religion. For instance, the Praśnopaniṣad refers to *Ṣaṭcakra Veda*, one of the most important subjects of discussion in the Tantras.

In the Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad there occur some *mantras* for chastising enemies carrying off wives, which are in many respects akin to tantric *mantras*. Kātyāyana, a seer of the Atharvaveda, is mentioned to have worshipped the Primordial Energy, more popularly known as Śakti in the name of Mahiṣamardinī in his hermitage in autumn at evening time at the root of a *beal* tree and it is said that pleased with the devotional worship of the Ṛṣi the goddess Mahiṣamardinī appeared in person to kill Mahiṣāsura, the terrible demon tyrannising over the Devas. The great saints Dattatreya, Viśvāmitra, Vasiṣṭha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nārada, Gautama, Kapila were all conversant with the tantric principle.

The Tantric form of worship was in vogue at the time when Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was written. There, in the Srīmad-Bhāgavatam, we find the Braja Gopis worshipping Yogamāyā (Goddess Śakti) for obtaining Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their Lord and there are ample references to Tantric gods and goddesses in it. That the Tantric religion was also in vogue in the days of the Purāṇas is also sufficiently clear from the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the Liṅga Purāṇa, and many other Purāṇas. References to Tantric deities and to the Tantric form of worship are also to be found in many ancient Sanskrit works.

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[1] *Vaidikī tāntrikī caiva Dvividhā Śrutiḥ kīrtitā.*

That the Tantras form a branch of the Vedas receives further confirmation from the fact that all Tantric *mantras* begin with the symbolic letter *Om*, which is the essence of all Vedas. It must however be admitted that the Tantric approach towards realisation of truths inculcated in the Vedas is more explicit and more practical. It must however be admitted that the Tantric approach towards realisation of truths inculcated in the Vedas is more explicit and more practical. It must however be remembered that the value of the Tantric practices and their significance, like all practical sciences, cannot be understood unless the doctrines are followed.

The origin of the Tantras and their gradual development under two categories, namely, the Āgamas and the Nigamas, is shrouded in mystery. Although much speculation has gathered round them, the view that the principles of the Tantric religion came from China or of the derivation of the Tantras from Mahāyāna Buddhism are no more tenable. There are reasons to believe that the Mahāyāna school has adopted the doctrines of the Hindu Tantras and the Hindu Tantras in their turn in later age have been considerably influenced by Buddhist Tantras which are in notable respects opposed to the original doctrines of Lord Buddha. Arthur Avalon, one of the greatest oriental scholars on the Tantric cult, has drawn the conclusion that there is no justification in favour of the argument that the Tantras are the off-shoots of the Buddhist Mahāyāna Cult. This is fully corroborated by Svami Saṅkarānanda, the author of Ṛgveda Culture of the Prehistoric Indus. According to him the Tantric worshippers formed a big part of the Arya society and acted as the standard bearers of the Aryan culture. In fact the ritual side of the Vedas and the practical *kriyas* for the attainment of spiritual unfoldment constitute what we now designate as the Tantras.

Another instance from the realm of science will make our position clear. Long before the birth of Organic Chemistry, there were in use among the ancient civilised nations several organic compounds, though regular treatises on Organic Chemistry came to be written only towards the later part of the nineteenth century. Again, ignorance is sometimes responsible for regarding a thing to be new or of recent date. We all know that Newton discovered the Law of Gravitation, but only very few of us know that five hundred years before the birth of Copernicus, the Hindus discovered that the earth revolves round the sun, and upon the basis of this scientific truth they calculated exact time of the eclipse, which is still now found to be precisely accurate, even according to the calculations of modern Astronomy. Thus formal treatises on a particular subject might be written in later times, though its subject-matter and its truth might have been known from the earliest time of human civilisations. And this, in all force, applies to the case of the Tantras, and Tantric religion with its rites and rituals was prevalent among the people long, long before the Tantras were written.

Even if the Tantric creed, in spite of incontrovertible historical evidence, is held to be of recent origin that alone will not take away a bit from the intrinsic worth of the Tantras and of Tantric religion. Truth is truth, whether discovered in the hoary past or at the present moment, and it cannot be brushed aside because it has very recently come to our knowledge. Nor does any truth give any additional value, like old wine, because it was revealed to our forefathers in the hoary past. Time has no influence on truth. Hence the great spiritual truths which Tantric religion embodies and which have been elaborated in the Tantras in later times, cannot lose any value or usefulness simply because they be of recent origin, though it has been fully proved, both on historical and literary evidence, that Tantric religion is as old as any other form of Vedic religion.

Thus, it is not antiquity, but the real intrinsic worth of a thing, which should be regarded as authoritative in the domain of religion and morality. And that is authoritative which is really uplifting, enlightening and chastening, and which is helpful for the attainment of perfection and felicity in life, and conducive to our final emancipation from all sins and sorrows. Simply because a thing is old, it is no reason to hold that it should be authoritative in matters of religious faith. A thing might have its usefulness once, but now it may be not only quite useless but even harmful. Nay more, irrational conservatism, even in matters of religion, hinders improvement and progress and induces us to make a fetish of an old, worn out creed.

> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils himself in many ways,

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

These wise words of the poet we often forget in our idolatrous veneration for the past.

Thus, a thing is not good simply because it is old nor is it bad simply because it is new. Hence truths of a particular religion can never lose their intrinsic value simply because they were not known in ancient times. Judged by the standard of mere antiquity as the only test of authority and authencity of truth, Christianity and Mahomedanism will appear to be less authoritative than the Jewish religion and heathenism of ancient Arabia. We need not speak more about it. The great truths of Tantric religion and of the Tantras will remain quite unsullied in their usefulness and worth whether they are found to be old or new.

What the mighty truths revealed by the Tantras are will be dealt upon in later chapters. We may only mention here that the Tantras have attempted to make a practical exposition of the truths and philosophical assertions, expounded in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. The Tantras have succeeded in giving practical demonstration of the most sublime teaching of man that "Verily, all this is Brahman." They have developed a system of thought and practices by which one can reach the conclusion that the divine glories in the macrocosm are no less immanent in the micracosm and that man by purification of heart and disciplined practices can attain a divine greatness which ultimately consumes his self and establishes his eternal unity with the Absolute, when he can exclaim in wonder, "I am He." They have opened the way to the acquirement of divine powers. The highest contribution of the Tantras towards human knowledge is, however, the discovery and location of the centres of energy, technically known as *cakras* in man —a discovery which is even more revolutionary in character than that of the atomic bomb. Moreover, the Tantric *Bijas* have struck root in Hindu religious life more than one can even imagine. A scrutiny of our daily practices, forms of worship, social manners and customs, glorification of matrimonial life, initiation, etc. will show to what great extent our activities are guided by Tantric principles.

It must, however, be admitted with reluctance that there are some prejudices even among the honest people against the Tantric creed on account of some of its rites and rituals, which would on superficial survey appear to be either highly licentious, or extremely cruel, or exceedingly loathsome. But if one only takes the trouble of going deeper into things he will find that they are neither licentious, nor cruel, nor loathsome, but they are some mystic rites and rituals (which have been degraded by the vicious people for their selfish ends and for the gratification of their animal appetites) calculated to help the devotee to advance along the path of moral perfection, which is absolutely essential for one's final emancipation. Again, some of these practices are designed for self-furthering concentration of the devotee, some for augmenting self-control, and some for the restraint of his senses, feelings and innate propensities. In a word, they are intended for the attainment of complete mastery over one's senses and passions, which are indispensable both for spiritual emancipation and for moral perfection, both of which go together. These rites and rituals consisting of many mystic symbols, constitute some of the occult secrets of the Tantras and of Tantric religion, which on closer examination will be found to be of very great psychological value for moral discipline as well as for the attainment of spiritual bliss..

The cause is not far to seek. The Tantras are written in *sandhya* language (twilight language) which can be explained in two ways, one in a refined sense and the other in a gross sense. It could be explained as in the light of the day or by the darkness of the night. The Hevajratantra, a canonical text of Tantric Buddhism, gives cue to the interpretation of many symbolic words used in Tantric literature. We shall revert to it in its proper place. We should, therefore, proceed with the subject with an unbiassed mind, and should remember that some of the greatest saints of India were Tantrics in their faith, and they observed in practice Tantric form of worship and Tantric rites and rituals. Good many men, whose public and private lives were uniform records of sterling purity, whose moral perfection and spiritual greatness could never be questioned even by the tongue of calumny, and who in their lives proved to their contemporaries what great divine perfection a man might attain by devotion and piety were Tantrics in their profession of faith. We need not go to remote antiquity for instances of it. There are such saintly persons among the Śāktas even in our own days. One may find them if he only takes the trouble of finding them out. We need not even refer to the holy Sādhaka Ramprasad or to Ramkrishna Paramhamsa. There are others even like them. They live and work unseen and even avoid popularity and public applause.

They will never themselves come to limelight. It is one of the main characteristics of the Hindu saints (to whatever sect they might belong) they never seek popularity or fame ; they do not at all wish to reveal themselves to their countrymen. They remain absorbed in their spiritual bliss. Fame sometimes follows their foot-prints and drags them out from their obscurity, as gold and diamonds are dug out from pitch-dark mines. To all impartial seekers of truth, our statement, we believe, will appear to be quite modest. What is in itself bane and corrupt can never produce anything great or noble, A tree is known by its fruit. This we should remember in judging the Tantras and Tantric creed.

CHAPTER II

RELIGION AND RELIGIONS

"A creature," says Thomas Huxley, "is the resultant of two tendencies ; the one, morphological ; the other, physiological."

This may be true about the physical constitution of every living thing, but this biological law does not explain the mysterious constitution of the human mind. What is it ? What is it made of ?

Man has been defined as a rational being. But this, we think, does not constitute his main differentia from other species of animals.[1] If Rationality does not mean the power of forming concepts or mere arguing faculty but means intelligence in general, then it is shared by all living beings more or less,—some in greater degrees, while others in smaller degrees. Nay more, such intelligence as is necessary for the maintenance of life is to be found even in the vegetable kingdom. Trees and plants send their roots in that direction of the soil that contains greater degree of sap and more nutrient elements.[2] Thus, intelligence is not the sole monopoly of man though undoubtedly he possesses it preponderantly. But there is something in man that is not to be found in other animals or in the vegetable kingdom. His morality, aesthetics and imagination have raised him from the level of brute creation. His power of reasoning has helped him to develop these rare qualities that have widened the gulf between man and other animals. He has the power of interpreting which is immediately present in consciousnes, and using the present as data from which to know the past, distant and future. He can anticipate in thoughts future experience and can judge what is good and can regulate his actions so as to realise what is good. By exercise of his reasoning faculty he can form a conception of the good in its different degrees and of the Highest Good and can devise means for the attainment of good and regulate his actions in confirmity with his place and function in the world system. Look at a savage whose sentiments, imagination and morality are of the lowest order ; his difference with other higher animals will surely appear to be less striking. He betrays only that amount of intelligence that is necessary for a living creature just for the maintenance of life, but hardly more. His reason, like other animal instincts, is employed for his survival in the struggle for existence. Thus the distinction and difference between man in the lowest stage of evolutionary progress and higher animals are less prominent. To designate animal intelligence as a mere blind instinct and reflex is but a dogmatic assumption without any strict logical proof. It is pointed out that animals are incapable of detecting any deception practised on them ; *e.g.*, a hen will sit upon an egg-shaped piece of chalk, as she would do to hatch her own eggs. Now, detection of deception depends upon degrees of intelligence and alertness. Man also is subject to deception ; even the cleverest men are sometimes deceived Intelligence of ant is quite astonishing ; and how can one say it is a mere blind instinct, whereas the intelligence of a wild Bushman is real intelligence *per se*. This is only an instance of supreme vanity of man about his own omniscience. The universe is permeated by one Divine intelligence; or there is nothing outside it. The power that manifests itself in the evolution of nature and of the animal and human organism and instincts is a conscious one. There is inherent and implicit in its operations that very attribute of self-adaptation and self-control which is designated as reason Physical nature, plants and animals are not conscious of the reason working in them in the shape of instinct of reflex action as mechanical response to external stimuli and determining their actions while man can rise to the status of a self-controlling person differentiating and co-ordinating his action for his own ends. It is the same spirit that sleeps in stones, dreams in animals and is awake in man

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[1] Cf. 'Intellect is not the sole faculty possessed by the human Ego.'—Lord Balfour F.R.S., Theism and Thought.

[2] Vide Herbert Spencer's 'Psychology' and 'First Principles.'

Again, reason in men themselves varies from vanishing point to superhuman intellect. Difference between a Śaṅkara and an ordinary man is, we think, much wider than between man and animals. If connection of man does not denote only men like Plato or Kālidāsa or Newton or Shakespeare, reason, we think, is not the sole distinctive feature of man ; it is not only a differentia that distinguishes 'species man' from the 'genus animals'. If, however, reason means only mathematical reasoning, which is not at all necessary in the struggle for existence, then, of course, it is the sole distinctive feature of man, but this is found only in the higher stages of civilisation, of which the wild savages have not the least notion. Therefore, to call man merely a rational animal is like Plato's original definition of man, to call him a featherless biped, which provoked Diogenes to exhibit to his pupils a roasted cock as Plato's man. Man has other attributes which are absent in all other animals, and they are really the special features of man. The most fundamental distinction and difference between man and other animals, we think, lies in the religious instinct of man. Man is a religious animal. He has a natural craving for a knowledge of what is beyond. The eternal question to him is *why*, as mentioned in the Kena Upaniṣad He cannot rest assured so long as he does not arrive at a solution of the mystery of the universe and receives a convincing explanation of the multiplicity and variety of the universe. He is in search of the ultimate unity which will explain all diversities, because in a dualistic or pluralistic philosophy the 'why' still remains unsolved. He is hankering after *ānanda* in all his activities and spheres of actions but being unsuccessful in getting it from the external world, he naturally veers round. According to the Hindu Śāstras the human life is best suited for the cultivation of religious practices and attainment of a divine life. It is said that even the gods have to assume human bodies when they are desirous of attaining higher standards of godliness. This particular feature of the human mind is not to be found in any other animal. Even the lowest savage has a religion of his own. No man has yet been discovered without some sort of religious belief, barring the exceptions that are found in the higher stages of intellectual development, who call themselves Agnostics. But even the Agnostics themselves may be said to possess a religion of negation,—a sort of religious faith with them—to ignore all religions. In fact this universal religious instinct is the guiding principle in man. It is the most potent factor in the evolution of human thought. It has played a very important part in the development of human civilisation and culture and it will continue to do so in the advancement of human progress and welfare, and also in moulding the future destiny of man.

"There is a gap in the human heart," says Romanes, "which nothing but God can fill." Science unravels before the mind's eyes the greatness of the universe and the tininess of man against this huge framework. It has attempted to explain the great laws that bind this universe and govern it. The more science advances, the more astonishing facts are revealed to man and the more he is enabled to have mastery over nature. Still in the inner-most corner of his heart lurk the mighty questions—Who is behind the universe and works out its destiny ? Who guides it through long long ages of time ? Who is the giver of weal and woe which man is heir to ? What is the end of Life and what happens after Death ? Such innumerable questions, spring eternal in the mind o' Man and make him believe in the existence of a Superior Spirit who is ever-existing, ever-knowing and ever-blissful. At times of joy man may be oblivious of Him but when the heart is afflicted with sorrow and grief and he feels himself without friends to bring him relief, during contemplative moods, his thought turns towards this Benign Spirit, ever good and ever loving, that brings him solace.

This universal instinct of submission which is present in every human heart, unless it is smothered by one's training or deliberate efforts by a particular mode of life, constitutes the true basis of all religions from the lowest to that of the highest order, for the cardinal feature of all religions is in essence one and the same. Putting aside all learned definitions of religion, religion may very briefly be defined as the worship of a Superior Power, either from veneration, or from fear for avoiding evils in life. With the lowest savage, religion is a religion of fear, and the Superior Power is to him very often a malicious spirit which is to be propitiated for avoiding danger or distress.[1]

But as man advances in civilisation, that Superior Power is no more an evil spirit or a malicious fiend but that Superior Power is to him the Creator and Governor of this universe, and he worships his Creator with veneration and love. The more and more a man advances in knowledge and culture, the higher and nobler becomes his religious concept. He then recognises in his Creator not only an awe-inspiring majesticity, but infinite goodness and love ; thus religion, at the last stage becomes a religion of veneration and love, —love for God and love for all, Yet, in one sense, the root of all religions is one and the same, whether it is gross animism or the highest form of a profoundly philosophical creed, i.e., it is the adoration of a Superior Power that lies at the bottom of all religious creeds, even if you wish to designate, with Herbert Spencer, that Superior Power as an Inscrutable Power manifested through nature. The Tantras call this Superior Power Śakti, the exact Sanskrit synonym for power and have explained in a unique way what remained inscrutable with the philosophers. The analysis and synthesis of this unfathomable Śakti, the creating, protecting and destroying force of the world, and the ways She fulfils Herself distinguish the Tantras from other systems of religion or philosophy.

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[1] **Vide Sir E. B. Taylor's 'Primitive Culture.'**

Mention may be made here that though the essence of all religions is one and the same, the forms of religion are many. And this must necessarily be, as there is difference between man and man in temperament, education, imagination, culture and taste. As there are different stages of civilisation, so there are different stages of religion. As people differ from one another in their ideals about different things, so they differ also about their religious ideals. The religious ideal or the religious concept of one man is bound to b different from that of another because two men are not of identica mentality or of identical imagination and taste. Thus there is scope for different creeds, and different forms of religion. The Hindus recognise this fundamental psychological truth. Therefore they allow greatest freedom in matters of religion. To a Hindu, religion is not a mere philosophical creed, a thing of profession only, but it is very intimately connected with a man's daily life and practice. Spiritual preceptors advice graduated courses of religious practices, for their pupils in accordance with their health, habits, thoughts, acquirements and propensities. Mr. Havell in speaking of the religious faith of the Hindus, has very rightly observed that 'To a Hindu, religion is hardly a dogma but a working hypothesis of human conduct, adapted to different stages of spiritual development and different conditions of life.' Therefore, a Hindu hates no creed, no form of religion, but holds every religion in respect. He knows that every form of religion, observed with devotion and faith, helps its votary to attain spiritual advancement and virtue. All roads lead to Rome, all forms of religion ultimately lead to God. Lord Śrī

Kṛṣṇa has declared in the Gītā, 'In whatsoever manner men come to me, in the self-same manner do I accept them.'

Men brought under the same religious persuasion and even under the same social institution, may have a great deal of similarity in their religious ideals or religious concepts, but it cannot be said that every man there has identically the same concept of religion or of God. It must differ according to taste. Hence utmost catholicity of view is necessary. But it can nowhere be found save in Hinduism, and among no other people except the Hindus. "The word exclusion," declares Svāmī Vivekānanda, in his classic address in the Parliament of Religion at Chicago, "is untranslatable in Sanskrit."

A Hindu recognises the necessity of different forms of religion and never tries to impose one uncompromising creed upon all alike. He even makes allowance for superstitions in matters of religious faith, for even that may help a man in the attainment of greater moral perfection or spiritual bliss. On this point we cannot express ourselves better than in the words of an illustrious writer, and we make no apology for quoting his remarks in extenso.[1]

"Superstitions appeal to our hopes as well as to our fears. They often meet and gratify the inmost longing in the heart. They offer certainties when reason can only afford possibilities or probabilities. They supply conceptions on which the imagination loves to dwell. They sometimes even impart a new sanction to moral truths. Creating wants which they alone can quell, they often become essential elements of happiness, and their consoling efficacy is most felt in the languid or troubled hours when it is most needed. We owe more to our illusions than to our knowledge. The imagination which is altogether constructive, probably contributes more to our happiness than the reason, which in the sphere of speculation is mainly critical and destructive. The rude charm which in the hour of danger or distress the savage clasps so confidently to his breast, the sacred picture which is believed to shed a hollowing and protecting influence over the poor man's cottage, can bestow a more real consolation in the darkest hour of human suffering than can be afforded by the grandest theories of philosophy. The first desire of the heart is to find something on which to lean. Happiness is a condition of feeling, not a condition of circumstances, and to common minds one of its first essentials is the exclusion of painful and harassing doubt. A system of belief may be false, superstitious, and reactionary, yet it may be conducive to human happiness, if it furnishes great multitudes of men with what they believe to be a key to the universe, if it consoles them in those seasons of agonising bereavement when consolations of enlightened reason are but empty words, if it supports their feeble and tottering minds in the gloomy hours of sickness and of approaching death. A credulous and superstitious nature may be degraded, but in many cases where superstition does not assume a persecuting or appalling form, it is not unhappy ; and degradation apart from unhappiness can have no place in utilitarian ethics. No error can be more grave than to imagine that when a critical spirit is abroad, the pleasant beliefs will all remain, and the painful ones alone will perish. To introduce into the mind the consciousness of ignorance and the pangs of doubt is to inflict or endure much suffering, which may even survive the period of transition. 'Why is it', said Luther's wife looking sadly back upon the sensuous creed which she had left, 'that in our old faith we prayed so often and so warmly, and that our prayers are now so few and so cold ?' "

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[1] Vide Edward Hartpole Lecky's History of European Morals.

Before we conclude we would like to refer to a strong inherent passion in man towards following religion for religion's sake without consideration of any reward or fear. Bentham says that Nature has placed man under the government of two great mistresses, Pleasure and Pain. But this is not the whole truth ; there is a strong emotion in man apart from that of mere pleasure and pain. It is his religious feeling or religious fervour that very often sets at naught one's instinct for pleasure or fear of pain. Religion is very often pursued independent of all considerations of pleasure and pain. At least, in the higher stages of religion, religion is pursued not for mere pleasure nor from fear for avoiding pain ; it is pursued for its own sake. Like duty for duty's sake, religion is followed for religion's sake. It is only in the lower forms of religion that religion is practised for love of reward, both in this world and in the next. In lowest forms of religion, it is pursued in order to avoid danger, distress, pain and suffering, and its non-observance is dreaded by the savage ; for he thinks that if he fails to propitiate the evil spirits, they will commit immense mischief to him. But in its higher phases religion is pursued for religion's sake, virtue is practised for virtue's sake, neither for happiness, nor for reward, nor from fear. Now whatever kind of religion a man might have, it is a vital part of his existence that influence his life and actions either for good or for evil.

Religion is thus not only a very distinctive feature of human life, but it plays perhaps the most important role in moulding the life of an individual as well as the life and history of a nation. The history of a nation, in one sense, is the history of its religious creed that ever modifies its political creed and social organisation, unless religion be only a conventional article of social custom. Nay more, every profound human feeling possesses a religious tint that ultimately leads to religion itself.

Now, once you admit the necessity of religion, which can never be denied without ignoring the broad facts of human life and society, you will have to logically admit the necessity of different forms of religion, suited to different temperaments of man and to different kinds and different stages of culture though all religions are at bottom one, i.e.. the worship of a Superior Power. The wild savage that in superstitious fear bows down to his stocks and stone and the civilised man that kneels down in veneration and love before the altar of God, in fact, obey the dictates of the primitive religious instinct implanted in every human heart, that differentiates and distinguishes man from other creature.

The Tantras enshrine the highest conception of God revealed to man through self-realisation, and as a matter of fact they profess a faith that approaches our idea of religion of religions. At the same time it has been its proud privilege to guide man to a spiritual life blessed with perfect bliss and peace of mind.

CHAPTFR III

DEVELOPMENT OF TANTRAS

It is a difficult task to define precisely the scope of the Tantras and to say what is exactly meant by the terms Āgama, Nigama and Yamala which are used in this connection. The literature on Tantras, both Hindu and Buddhist, is inconceivably large and the subject covered by them are surprisingly so varied that no common platform is obtainable whence a clear-cut definition of Tantra may be derived. The aims and objects of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantras again being different and the underlying doctrines being wide apart, the difficulty of definition becomes all the more pronounced.

Tantra is a Sanskrit word meaning rule and regulation, system, or administrative code. We have in Sanskrit words like *Śāsana-tantra*, meaning a system of government. Taking in this light Tantra would come to mean a branch of knowledge which will offer a systematic and scientific method by which the spiritual powers inherent in man can be brought out and human life may be blessed with a glimpse of reality and attain salvation. It also stands for *śāstra* meaning a code which is meant to govern the activities of man in all their aspects.

Tantra is derived from the root *tan* meaning to expand. Tantra will then come to mean all-comprehensive knowledge or expansion of knowledge,—an appreciation of the fact that external objects about us are all the outcome of some conscious force within. The material universe is the play of a conscious energy expressing itself in various modes of manifestations. Tantra thus attemp's to expand our bounds of knowledge which are confined to material objects only and bring about full development of mind.

In Śrī Caṇḍī which is the essence of the Tantra just as the Gītā is the essence of the Upaniṣads, Tantra is said to be that which is concerned with the *parāvidyā*, a knowledge of the ultimate Reality responsible for the creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe and that will help men tortured by the cycle of births and deaths and burning under the smart of three classes of pain, *viz.*, *ādhibhautika* (pertaining to the body), *ādhyātmika* pertaining to the mind) and *ādhidaivika* (pertaining to natural phenomenon, e.g., heat, cold, draught, flood, etc.) to the path of liberation from all sufferings for good. In Tantra the conscious energy has been named as *Brahmavidyā*, which shows that Tantra covers the same ground as the *Advaitavāda* of the Vedānta but its approach is different. While the Advaita philosophy emphasises on the oneness of the things around us and urges the need of realising the One behind who is the only substantial thing, the Tantra says that the absolute one is the sole possessor of Energy which makes and moves this universe with its diversity. In Tantras, the energy has also been called Mahāmāyā, the great mother affectionately holding her children in her bosom and graciously granting all their desires of life and caring them through numerous vicissitudes to the abode of permanent bliss. With attainment of Tantric knowledge all doubts and enquiries are stilled and the worldly ties of attachment are served for good. Tantra stands for a code of Sādhanā for attaining a knowledge of the self and the twenty-five *tattvas* (five elemental principles, ten senses of perceptions and action, five *prāṇas*, mind *buddhi*, *citta* and *ahaṁkāra*) with a devotional spirit sacrificing the egoistic attitude. Thus in one word Tantra is a system of knowledge that will be of assistance in realising the ideal of life.

According to *Śabdakalpadruma*, Tantras are said to deal with the creation and dissolution of the universe, the determination of the mantras, the abode of the gods, a description of the sacred places, the duties of the four different *āśramas* (Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra), the duties of the Brāhmaṇa, the abode of the animals, the description of the Yantras, the creation of the celestials and Kalpatarus, development of astronomy, recounting the stories of the Purāṇas, narration of the *Kośas* and religious vows and rites, differentiation between pure and impure, cycles of birth and death, recapitulation of royal duties, assemblies and characteristics of men and women, the tradition of the different ages, manners and customs, spiritual knowledge, etc.

Āgama, literally meaning a source whence spiritual knowledge has proceeded in all directions has got the following seven characteristics, *viz.*, creation of the universe, dissolution of the universe, worship of the gods and goddesses, spiritual course of man, *puraścaraṇa* (repetition of the mantras for attaining perfection), performance of the Ṣatkarma (six actions, *viz.*, Māraṇa, Uccāṭana, Vaśīkaraṇa, Stambhana, Śānti and Vidveṣaṇa) and the four methods of meditation. The Āgamas have again been classified under three major classes, *viz.*, Śaivāgama, Śāktāgama and Vaiṣṇavāgama which is otherwise known as Pañcarātra. Yāmalas of which the most famous are Brahma Yāmala, Rudra Yāmala and Jayadratha Yāmala, discuss the following : the creation of the universe, astronomical stories, daily routine of work, the order of performing duties, aphorisms, the different castes and the characteristics of the ages.

The Tantric method of *sādhanā* was in existence in essence from very ancient times and was in vogue widely in all parts of India and its doctrines and percepts even gained circulation beyond the seas and behind the frontiers. This will be evident from the fact that the old Tantras divide Tantric world into three main regions, *viz.*, Viṣṇukrānta (a region extending from the Vindhyas up to Chattla), Aśvakrānta (a region extending from the Vindhyas to Mahācīna and Nepal) and Rathakrānta (from the Vindhyas to the great ocean including Kamboja and Java) It will be seen in the midland country where Bramhanical culture prevailed it is excluded from these three zones.

More detailed description of the countries where Tantras spread is obtainable from some Tantric texts which fix the zones according to two different Tantric modes Kādi and Hādi, which are known as *Prakāśa* and *Vimarśa* aspects of Śakti.

The countries where the Kādi mode of Tantra gained popularrity were :—Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Kerala, Kaśmīra, Kāmarūpa, Mahārāṣṭra, Saurāṣṭra, Dravida, Tailiṅga, Malayādri, Karṇāṭa, Avanti, Vaidarbha, Ābhīra, Mālavā, Caula, Cola, Kamboja, Videha, Bahlīka, Kirāta. Kaikaṭa. Airuka, Bhoṭa, Cīna, Mahācīna, Nepal, Silahatta, Gauḍa, Kosala, Magadha, Snotkala, Kuntala, Hūna, Koṅkaṇa, Kekaya, Sūrasena, Kaurava Siṁhala, Pulinda, Kaccha, Madra. Sauvīra, Lāṭa, Barbara, Matsya and Sindhu.

The countries in which Hādi mode was in vogue were :— Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Sauvīraka, Kaśmīra, Kamboja, Saurāṣṭra, Magadha, Mahārāṣṭra Mālavā, Nepal, Kerala, Cola, Cala, Gauḍa, Malaya, Siṁhala, Vonka, Vido, Vyonda, Karṇāṭa, Lāṭa, Malata, Panata. Andhaka, Pulindaka, Hūṇa, Kaura, Gandhāra, Vidarbha, Videha, Bahlika, Barbara, Kekaya, Kosala, Kuntala, Kirāta, Śūrasena, Sevara, Banata, Tonkana, Kankana, Matsya, Madra, Maida, Saindhava, Parsvakika, Dyorjala, Yavana, Jala, Jalandhara, Salva and Sindhu.

A glance at the names of the regions mentioned will convince the reader that the Tantric mode of worship spread even outside India to such countries as Bāhlika (Balkh), Kirāta (hill tribes of the Kirāta zone), Bhoṭa (Tibet), Cīna (China), Mahācīna (Mangolia, Maida (Media), Pārśvakika (Persia), Avaika (Iraq), Kamboja, Hūṇa, Yavana, Gandhāra, Nepal, etc. Even non-Aryan countries are noted within the two lists. These are Pulinda, Kirāta. Barbera, Tankana, Ābhīra, Kuntala; etc.

The list is quite a formidable one. The most important centres of Tantric culture are however enumerated as four, *viz.*, Kāmarūpa, Pūrṇagiri, Oddiyāna and Jalandhara. Kāmarūpa in Assam, otherwise known as Prāgjyotiṣpur (the land of first illumination) is the most important of the four. Tantric practices here flourished under the patronage of the local royal dynasty which is stated to have its original home in Mahācīna, a country famous in the lore of Buddhist Tantras. The place had communications with China, Brahmā, Nepal, Chattala, etc. The next zone Pūrṇagiri has not yet been identified. Another *pīṭha* is Oddiyāna which is situated in the valley of the Swat river with facilities of communication with Balkh, Samarcand, Panevi, Klotan, Khasgara. The trading classes from these countries visited Oddiyāna for trade and exchanged thoughts. The last *pīṭha, viz.*, Jalandhara, is situated on the highway connecting Tibet with India.

The word *pīṭha* is sometimes used in a different sense. There are in India widely scattered 51 *pīṭhasthānas* where the dismembered holy body of Satī, the consort of Śiva, fell when it was sundered into pieces by the discus of Viṣṇu after the disastrous sacrifice of the Prajāpati Dakṣa. We have heard of the enshrining of the teeth, nails, and possessions of Lord Buddha in different parts of India and even outside its shores. Hence, there may be some truth behind the mythological legends of the Purāṇas relating to the most unfortunate manner of the passing away of Satī, the beloved consort of Śiva, and the enshrinement of her limbs in those parts of India where Śiva was held in high reverence. These are all sacred places for Tantric worshippers with temples of the Goddess as well as of Śiva. These places are still now the stronghold of Tantric traditions. The most noted of these are :—

Hingula (90 miles north of Karachi), Jvālāmukhī, (in the Punjab), Nasik, Ujjaini, Prayaga, Godavari, Gaṇḍakī, Karatoyā, Śrīparvata (near Ladak below Hindukush), Karṇāṭa, Bṛndāvana, Kālīghāṭ (in Calcutta), Kirata, Sylhet, Nalhati, Amarnath (Kaśmir), Ratnāvalī (Madras), Mithilā, Chittala, Puṣkara (near Ajmer), Prayāga (modern Allahabad), Bahula (near Katwa in Bengal), Jalandhara, Ramagiri, Vaidyanatha, Puri, Kandi (near Bolepore), Kāmarūpa (in Assam), Nepāl. Magadha, Jayanti, Tipperah, Kurukṣetra, Vakresvara (in Birbhum), Jessore, Benares, Ceylon, etc.

It will be seen that the highest number of *pīṭhas* happen to be in Bengal where Tantric mode of worship gained immense popularity. The Śakti cult met with great favour among the higher classes of society and the Śiva view was predominant among the circle of the low-class people. This may be due to the percolation of Buddhism into the Hindu society in the seventh to twelfth century. When Buddhism was ruled out of India, Śakti cult was followed by the one-time followers of the Mahāyāna Buddhism and the Śiva cult by those of Hīnayāna Buddhism.

Bengal is alike responsible for a large number of Tantras which are widely known on account of the wealth of knowledge they contain. Their highest and most valuable contribution to the realm of Tantrism is that they introduced a new interpretation of the Tantric practices and thus achieved the wonder of eradicating the demoralised practices which had in the past crept into Tantrism and were one of the causes of keeping them secret. The most important of them are Śyāmā Rahasya, Tārā Rahasya, Cāmuṇḍā Tantra, Bagalā Tantra, Chhinnamasta Mantra Rahasya, Mahanirvāṇa Tantra, Kulārṇava Tantra, Bṛihat Kāli Tantra, Nīla Tantra, etc. In later date the Tantrasāra and Śāktānandataraṅgiṇī were two outstanding works in Bengal on Tantra which are now regarded as authority by Tantrics in many points. There methods of initiation, sitting postures, eight-fold path of yoga, worship, meditation and means of achieving *siddhis*, holding of *cakras* are discussed. It was definitely stated that unless one has control over his senses and has conquered the six enemies (desire, anger, avarice infatuation, vanity and self-glorification), is truthful and regular in religious practices, one can never attain liberation. The old practices of holding *cakra* in a manner inconsistent with sense of morality, was highly condemned as degrading and notorious.

The *Līlās* of Śrīkṛṣṇa as depicted in Śrīmad Bhāgavata were interpreted in a new light by the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas under the influence of Śrī Caitanya to drag the society out of the mire of demoralisation and evil practices committed in the name of religion by eulogising the merit of elevating the pleasures from the plane of sensuality to that of divine love with Śrīkrisṇa, who was the only Puruṣa in the universe, all others being Prakṛtis in miniature form created to serve the Puruṣa in all ways. The *Rāsa Līlā* Section of the Bhāgavata, one of the highest conceptions in any Purāṇa, gives new orientation to the Tantric mode of *cakra* and transcends human love to a plane of divinity bereft of the least touch of carnal desires.

Tantric Sādhakas of Bengal of whom Ramprasad of holy name may be cited as a type emphasised on worshipping Śakti as mother. It is said that he performed various rites including *Śava Sādhanā* (meditation on a dead body) for the attainment of perfection. Ramprasad in his numerous songs which enshrine his views urged recitation of the name of Kālī, the great mother, with a devout heart without pomp in an unostentatious manner. He proclaimed boldly the oneness of deities carrying different names in the various *pīṭhas*. He deprecated debates on religious teachings but advised following them in the spirit they are offered and note the results themselves. Tantric religion is essentially a practical code inculcating processes to be followed step by step and the truths can only be realised on practice. One may have glimpse of Goddess by constantly repeating Her name with devotion and prayer instead of putting too such reliance on *Yantra* and *mantra*. By devout repetition of name of Kāli, even in dream and parting this body with Her name one can conquer death and win a blissful existence in this earth and hereafter. Ramprasad practised meditation in the various nervous centres (*cakras*) and many of his songs contain an explanation of the mystics of this sort of *sādhanā*.

We shall close this chapter with a short account of the spread of Tantras. The ancients thought that the source of spread of the Tantras was mysterious. Oriental scholars all, however, agree that the founder of the Tantras is Śiva, from whose mouth the Tantras have emerged. But nothing more about Śiva was known and his teachings. The Purāṇas recording the doings of Śiva and his clash with the orthodox Brahmanical leaders were not accorded as much attention as these deserved. Now, who is this Śiva ? Is he the three-eyed God of Gods, wielding the Trident and holding the *ḍamaru* and *viṣāṇa* in his hands ? Or is he His incarnation on earth for the deliverance of the people steeped in ignorance and worldly pleasures ? That Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to assume a human form to preach the teachings of the Gītā is admitted on all hands. So it may be taken that the great god Śiva incarnated himself for delivering the people of that time from dragging them out of the evil practices they were plunged in and making them religion-minded.

Shorn of the Śāstric techniques, the ancient account about Śiva boils down to this :—Śiva resided in the Himalayan heights of Kailāsa. He was of purely Indian culture and had no connection with the Aryan stock who came from outside and occupied the upper part of India up to the Vindhya ranges, driving the aborigines southwards. Those of the non-Aryan stock remained in Āryāvarta were treated as *Śūdras* or workers to serve the Aryans, ungrudgingly, and scarcely received a status in life. In the winter Śiva would leave Kailāsa and travel widely, half-naked, clad in tiger-skin, besmearing his body with ashes of funeral pyre, via Gangotri or Hardwar to Benares and various places in the South where the people worshipped him and awaited his arrival with anxiety. His airs, his movements, his lack of decency and intimacy with the depressed and the oppressed did not at all conform to the Aryan standard of life. His gigantic body with a protruding belly entwined by snakes, with eyes always turned inwards under the influence of intoxicating drinks was an eye-sore to the Aryans, who kept themselves away from him. But Śiva was a champion of the poor, the diseased and the tyrannised. He would solace them in their sorrow, encourage them to be good, nurse them with his own hands and treat them with medicines which were infalliable. To him there was none uutouchable including the beasts ; he hated no body ; he made no distinction between the high and the low. His blessings to the childless would always fructify. He was an adept in the use of bows and fatal weapons. He knew *bāṇa*, which would hypnotise an army and defeat it without killing the soldiers He was skilled in chemistry and medicine both of which have proceeded from him. He was widely known for his *yogic* powers and was known as *yogendra*. He would instruct yoga to those who intended to learn it. His love for the poor, kind words to the distressed, disinterested, nursing of the sick, and good will for the oppressed and down-trodden in society endeared him to them.. He brought life and joy wherever he went. He had numerous followers in Aryāvarta as well as in the Southern India, the latter being designated by the Aryans as Asuras, Rākṣasas, Dānavas who were in constant conflict with Aryans as regards the ideals of life and would cause hindrance to the sacrifices of the Brāhmaṇas whenever and wherever possible. The clashes of Rāma with the Rākṣasas are reminiscent of the conflicts that were occurring in the age of the Rāmāyaṇa between the Aryans and non-Aryans who had been driven south of the Vindhyas. The story of the Vindhya Ranges rearing up their head bespeaks of the growing barrier in the way of fusion of the two nations which the Aryans sought by their forceful tactics, and the account of the lowering down of the heads by the Vindhya Ranges before Agastya who marched downwards never to return is indicative of the strenuous efforts made by the Aryans to culturally conquer the Dravidians, the original dwellers of the land.

During the time of Śiva a mighty monarch named Prajāpati Dakṣa ruled over the middle part of the Himalayan territory under Aryan occupation. His capital was Kanakhala through which town Śiva passed every year during his journey from Kailāsa to Kumārica and back. The subjects of the land specially the outcastes and those smarting under the arrogant and beauracratic rule of Dakṣa, naturally found a saviour and champion in Śiva whom they adored. Now the king had a beautiful and accomplished daughter, Satī by name. The activities of Śiva and specially his whole-hearted service and selfless deeds for the relief of all, irrespective of position and nationality, made a strong impression on her tender and noble heart. She yearned after Śiva. This is not curious. In those days the accounts are not rare where noble ladies only hearing of the qualifications and brave deeds of youths, even without meeting them personally, fell in love with them, Rukmiṇī and Damayantī are instances in view. Satī married Śiva against the wishes of Dakṣa and left for Kailāsa, the abode of Śiva. Long years rolled on. Once news reached Satī of a grand sacrifice being held by Dakṣa. Satī wished to attend the sacrifice even though uninvited. Śiva objected to her proposal. But so strong was her desire to see her parents and her sisters who would be present on the occasion that she for the first time disregarded her husband's advice. In the assembly had gathered noble men, princes and kings with their queens in rich attire as suited to the occasion, and so when Satī appeared on the scene scantily and poorly dressed Dakṣa felt greatly disgraced and flying in a violent rage he showered most offensive insults to Śiva. The situation was too much for Satī to bear. She swooned away, never to regain her senses.

This sad and unprecedented news spread like wild fire in Kanakhala and to other towns. Śiva was furious on hearing of it. His numerous followers, in sympathy with Śiva, their erstwhile champion, rose up in a body. The whole town burst into a rebellious riot. The general discontent and dissatisfaction against Brahmanical tyranny which was so long working underground now met a sudden outburst. The sacrificial ground was desecrated and Dakṣa even was humiliated. The sacrifice came to an end and the rebellion spread outside the town. So great was the resentment against the Brahmanical obstinacy, that the Brahmins had to come to a compromise with Śiva, whom they accepted as one of Trinity. The Paurāṇic account of the union of Hari and Hara (Śiva) bears out this. The character of Vaidika religion underwent a severe change. The *yoga* system of which Śiva was the propounder was introduced for the first time in the Hindu society. Tantric principles met a wide following by the Brahmins wherever they did not clash with the Aryan notion of caste system and the claim of the superiority of the Brahmins.

This state of affairs continued up to the time of Buddha. Up to that time favoured by royal power Brahmanism had flourished. The Karmakāṇḍa of the Vedas attracted the people more than the Jñānakāṇḍa of the Upaniṣads. There was great fascination for sacrifices with sacrifice of beasts. No big work was undertaken by any body without sacrifice. This zeal for sacrifices was meaningless. In the Paurāṇic period sacrifices like ***rājasūya, aśvamedha, agniṣṭoma***, etc., were the order of the day. The sacrifices were mostly performed with some worldly purpose. Even in Aśoka's time we find frequent occurrences of sacrifices in the kingdom in which animals were sacrificed on a gigantic scale. There was free use of meat in the assemblies.

Buddha, however, stood up against this wanton spirit of sacrifice in the country and preached a religion of love and non-injury. He forbade unnecessary rigorous austerities as then obtaining in the society. The Tantric idea of society without distinction of caste appealed to him and he preached equality of men. This religion however, received a stimulus during the reign of Aśoka who gave it his royal support. With the spread of Buddhism, Brahmanism suffered greatly. A virile nation throbbing with new life and energy arose. Instead of restricted and stifled activity of men under Brahmanical society ridden over by the upper classes and Brahmins.

there came into existence, as never before, scope for united effort, every man being offered opportunity to serve his country according to his own capacity. But on the dismemberment of the Mauryan empire sacrifices again revived. Thus an incessant tussel went on between the Brahmanism on the one hand and Buddhism on the other. After the *parinirvāṇa* of Buddha, his religion underwent many tremendous changes. The Buddhist thinkers were influenced by Tantric doctrines which had all along persisted among the people. The madiaeval period beginning with the later part of seventh century down to the advent of Mohammedan powers may be rightly termed as the Tantric period. The Tantric ideas which were scattered among the public by songs composed by Tantric Sādhakas, called Tantrācāryas were now collected in book-forms and thousands of Tantras were written. Tantric works came into existence in large numbers. Prajñāpāramitā introduced worship of Buddha with all its paraphernalia of worship according to the Hindu mode. Side by side grew up Pauranic literature with interesting accounts of the ancient times couched in a language appealing to the public taste. Observance of vows and worship of the gods and goddesses eulogised in these Purāṇas were stated to yield material prosperity in this life and]happiness]hereafter. Moreover, the Buddhists defied not only the important personalities, as has been done much later by the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas but also deified ideas and philosophical thoughts just as an] artist will portray the spring or the famine on his canvas. Again this had reaction on the Hindus who readily incorporated the Buddhist ideas, doctrines and gods and goddesses even, of course modifying them in their own way. It may be mentioned that the Buddhists also in like manner introduced in their Tantras gods like Gaṇeśa and Sarasvatī.

In the absence of good teachers many evil practices entered among the Tantrics. Rich monasteries came to be the strongholds of unscrupulous priests engaged in most objectionable rites and practices. The eighth century was disastrous for Buddhist Tantrism. Śaṅkarācārya who flourished in this century reorganised the crumbling Hindu society and by his active propaganda and influence was instrumental in practically wiping away Buddhist Tantrism, which went underground. Buddhists in huge nnmbers entered the Hindu fold by professing to adopt the Hindu creed. There was again much give and take between the two. Śaṅkarācārya has been called a hidden Buddhist by many, among whom rank Śri Caitanya. He ha been really up against the immoral practices that prevailed in the society in the name of religion. It has been stated that his Vedānta philosophy includes much of the Buddhist philosophy, but his great genius lay in replacing Śūnya of the Buddhists by Brahma, the Absolute One. It has been the misfortune of India that all creeds have decayed in the absence of prominent leaders, and this was the case with both Hinduism and Buddhism in those days. The advent of the Mohammedans in India further crippled the Tantric form of worship. They looted alike the rich monasteries and temples of the Buddhists and Hindus and hunted down the priests and Kapāliks who indulged in heinous practices. Whatever power Tantrism retained was lost after the rise of Śrī Chaitanya who gave a new interpretation to Vaiṣṇavism. He incorporated in his religion a casteless society which induced the Buddhists fallen into disrepute to take to his shelter. New communities like Aul, Baul, Sahajiya appeared in this way as a result of the fusion of Tantrism and Vaiṣṇavism. The Tantrics even at that time, assimilating what was best in Vaiṣṇavism, produced a great work styled as Rādhā Tantra, according to which the lives and works of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are stated to bear distinct marks of Tantric influence.

Thus, it appears though seriously crippled, Tantrism continued to exist. In recent years many Sādhakas namely Ramprasad, Kamalakanta, in Bengal, have by their deeds given a fillip to the Tantric religion, discarding the *Paśyacara* view which allows free use of *pañcamakāras*. The British period has been fruitful of researches in an unbiased way on the Tantric creed and its objects. One great drawback in the Tantra creed was that the things were to be kept secret, and under cover of this practice many foul practices were followed in secret unchallenged and the innocent followers in the absence of literature discussing the subject from all aspects of view were unfortunately entrapped. Now works are being published on Tantras. Oriental Research Society sponsored by the Gaekwar of Baroda and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad have published many Sanskrit texts with annotations for the first time. Illustrious scholars are working in the line and bringing to light the contribution of the Tantras towards the, moral and spiritual progress, of the world. One of them, Justice Woodroff has published a series of books which throw a flood of light on the achievements and failures of the Tantras as well.

We shall take up the creed and ideals of the Tantras in due place.

CHAPTER IV

TANTRAS THROUGH THE AGES

Religion, like all arts and sciences, has got a dynamic urge inherent in itself. Being related to human element it cannot be otherwise. Ideals of life, moral standard, manners and customs, education and culture and even the socio-economic structure have greatly tended towards the development of religious concepts in man, although it must be admitted that religion also in its turn has influenced them not to a little extent. Thus it is found that man's ideas of religion have undergone profound changes through the ages, though the process has been too slow to be noticeable from day to day. A universal religion unrelated to the times and unfettered by ruling circumstances is a desideratum to be realised, no one knows when.

The Tantric religion in the past must have been therefore, related to the socio-economic conditions of the time of its rise. In a previous chapter reference has been made to the time when the Tantras first appeared. The recent excavations in Mohen-jo-daro and Harappa are illuminating in this respect. It is reported that no images of gods and goddesses have been traced among them, the only idol of worship so far explored bears similarity with the Śiva-liṅgam as met with in Southern India, where the original dwellers of the land had been driven by the Aryans who occupied the northern part of the country known as Āryāvarta. It thus appears that the worship of Śiva, the source of all Tantras, has been current in the soil of India long before the occupation of India by the Aryans.

To comprehend what the Tantric religion was in its primitive form, we should, therefore, take dispassionate views of the socio-economic forces in play in those days in the light of the accounts available for consideration as result of historical, archaeological and anthropological researches in this field. Society, as we now understand it, was still in a formative period. Social institutions governing social activities had not yet sprung up. Arts and crafts, agriculture and industries, were not pursued to any measurable extent, if not at all. The people had to live mainly upon fruits and roots of trees growing by themselves and on animal flesh and fish. The climate being moderate and procurement of food and the simplest necessaries of life being easy, the people had ample time in hand to give themselves over to merriment. In the polar regions even to this day meat and fish form the staple food of the people but availability of food and clothings to protect themselves against the rigours of an extreme climate being most strenuous and exacting, the people there have no time left for leisure.

Different conditions prevailing in the Indian soil have lent a distinctive colour to Indian civilization. Even in the days of the Mahābhārata, there are references to show that a large number of people could live on roots and fruits growing abundantly, only waiting to be plucked. Games were also available in plenty. The Pāṇḍava brothers while living in the Kāmyaka forest in exile passed long years feeding upon fruit and roots and by hunting animals. Only once during their long sojourn there, they had to change their residence to a neighbouring forest. In the Rāmāyaṇa also it is mentioned that Rāma in accompaniment of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa lived long fourteen years in Daṇḍakāraṇya in the Deccan taking only roots and fruits.

Living being so easy, people had much time to spare which they devoted in making themselves merry. In all primitive societies people are stated to be greatly fond of flesh and fish, and drinking is widely practised among all sections of people. Even the primitive societies of which we have record are known to drink wine of their own make and enjoy themselves by dancing and mixing with girls. Hence, in the natural order of things the ancient people of India, the original dwellers of the soil, took pleasure in drinking wine and in dancing in company of the girls they took a fancy for and in mixing with them. Marriage institutions had not yet developed. There was promiscuous mixing, and marriages, if any, occurred in case of couples tied by the bonds of love. The Purāṇas also bear testimony to this fact. There was no distinction between man and man, and there was no hindrance placed in the way of marriage between a man and a woman, if they were so inclined. The society was still purely matriarchal, the task of rearing up children devolving upon the mother.

The form of religion in those days must have been very simple. No definite idea of god-head could be expected in a society of this pattern. That there is consciousness within which is the fountainhead of energy in man and guiding him through his manyfold day-to-day activities is the first revelation in India, and this is the very first principle of Tantric religion. In this respect also it differs from other religions. They all proclaim the existence of God who is in the Heavens. Indian thinkers have alone since the dawn of civilization turned inwards and have proclaimed in a sonorous and unvacillating tone born of conviction that the Supreme Being governing the universe is within the self of every being. This is the first glorious revelation of God and is the cardinal point in the Vedas and the Hindu Scripture. This is the first glimpse of Satyam the all-existence who is also concomitant with, as the scriptures and the Purāṇas glorify, with Śivaṁ, the all-mercy and Advaitam, the Absolute. This is the seed of the Tantras and of the Hindu religion as well. In the Purāṇas wherever there is mention of revelation of the highest order, this is the chief topic under discussion, under the name of *Adhyātma Vidyā*. In the Upaniṣads this Vidyā has been eulogised in the highest terms as untying the fetters of the bonds of the heart and clarifying all doubts and enquiries. This has been said to be the path to the realization of the Absolute who being inherent in the creation is at the same time behind it, controlling it and in no way restricted or limited by it.

The first message of the human consciousness as the emblem of God of whom nothing is known and knowledge is a startling one. To a casual reader it would seem to be an exaggeration to dwell on this point. But one who patiently thinks over it with a pure heart undistracted by worldly considerations will realise what great truth lies in this simple statement. It, as if, opens the door to the inner chamber of realisation which is the characteristic of Hindu Sādhanā. As we have said, the first concept of God in India has been that though we know nothing of Him He is perceivable in the heart of our hearts as consciousness, from whom emanate radiations of various sense-perceptions and knowledge. Just as in the sea the mast of a ship is first visible and then the entire vessel; just as when a huge mountain is observed from a long distance, it looks like a hazy outline of clouds; just as a tremendous cloud over-flooding the earth appears in the distant horizon as no bigger than a speck ; just as a shapeless mass of clay is given a shape by a potter and is then decorated ; so the great God, the Almighty, Omniscient and Omnipresent, at first sight looks no bigger than a spot, a mere sign, a Liṅgam. We do not distinguish Him clearly and we do not perceive His glories. We only know that He is within in the shape of consciousness. This is the Śiva beating in every human heart, nay in the heart of all beings animate and inanimate.

The first prophet, our obeisance goes to him, understood that the object of life was not pleasure-hunting as the common people are prone to believe, but to seek after the absolute Truth. In fact, all beings are driving knowingly or unconsciously to this end. This idea has been elucidated by philosophers of later ages. One cannot evade birth which is mixed with innumerable sufferings and pangs of death unless one gets established in his own self which is the Liṅgam, the *Aṅguṣṭamātra Puruṣa* of the Upaniṣads, of the Absolute Self, the Parama Puruṣa.

The first prophet so gives a clarion call to the people steeped in ignorance and in sensual pleasures to veer round and enquire within. In the Kiṣkindhya Kāṇḍam of the Rāmāyaṇa there is a pen-picture how the brave Sugrīva, the monkey king, was passing his days in the inner apartment in the company of his wife under the influence of liquors forgetting his royal duties and promises to Rāma who had installed him on the throne by killing his valiant brother Bāli. And such was the general rule in these days. The reformer was aware of the limitations of the people whom he would uplift from the mire of object callousness to religion and to the path of virtue and truth. That he would take a path that would serve his purpose with the least resistance seems to be quite justifiable and the direct method of approach. He marked that the people were very fond of flesh, fish, wine, dance and enjoyment of women, which happened to be the only diversion to them. A moralist and a prophet banning all these evils would be a *Himalayan* failure. The men, in the absence of education and culture and any noble ideal in life, were to be gradually drawn away from their daily routine. A high preceptial teaching might have been admitted by the people to be good but their addiction to the worldly pleasures would have proved too strong to be overcome. He therefore presented before them the mode of Sādhanā known in the Tantras as *paśyacara*. A sentient may indulge in the five *makāras*, as they are called, but he has to practise all these in the name of God within. This will be curbing his passions to some extent, and if occasionally one remembers and offers his oblations to Śivam in things he takes and enjoys, his sense of morality and decency was bound to develop.

The Tantra, however, proceeds much further. It dives deep into this unfathomable ocean of consciousness which manifests itself in this material universe and the universe of thoughts, feelings and actions. It teaches that just as fire is ever accompanied with burning capacity, so this consciousness is ever associated with Śakti which means the power of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, thinking, breathing, feeling, and willing. Without the union of Śiva and Śakti there is no creation The two are inseparable indeed. Śiva, the pure consciousness, is the silent seer of all experiences while it is Śakti who brings forth the universe, sustains it and destroys it to please Śiva. When the idea of two merges, it is state of *Ānanda*, infinite joy and ecstacy where there is no room for this universe of our practical experience.

The Tantra is all-embracing in character. Every thought, every feeling and every deed, good or bad, noble or low, is the expression of this consciousness within. In its eye nothing is to be regarded as outside. The phenomenal world of our experience is real in the eye of the Tantra and pulsates with life, feelings and joy. To a bound *jīva* with limited vision the world appears to be chimerical and an illusion but to the Tantric it is the *Ānandamayī* in flesh and blood. This descends through the five sheaths or *Kośas*, as they are called, and constitutes bodied beings and material bodies as well. *Ānandam* is the objective of the Tantra, which cannot be experienced except through coming in contact with the objective world which is the reflection of the subject within, A Tāntric's Sādhanā is thus to transcend every thought or feeling gathered by coming in contact with the outside world to consciousness pure and simple, which is self-operating and eternal bliss The sentient has to follow the course of every experience just as a *yogi* follows the course of the breath. He has to note how an outside object is perceived through the senses of perception, how it acts upon the mind, how it moves the heart, how it impresses the *Saṁskāra* and becomes a part and parcel of the subject, who can again bring this out as desired. A thing to see enters through the eyes, creates a photo of it in the mind, revives the seer within and generates impression and sublime joy. The *pañcamakārā* practice is to be viewed in this light. These five stages of realisation have been elucidated in the Upaniṣads in the name of Hiṅkāra, Prastāva, etc. By following this descent and ascent of thought, a sentient can attain to perfect knowledge which is unalloyed joy Joy is not in the seer nor in the object of sight but in the union of these two, which is sight, which is Śakti, the *summum bonum* of the Tantras.

The above is the genesis of the Tantras and much water has run down the Ganges since that date. The society has undergone a thorough change. The old laxity of man which often led to evil complexities has been restrained by *śāstric* injunctions. Marriage and its sanctity are revered everywhere. Father is the head of the family. The society is now cultured, enlightened and refined. The people are keen in intelligence, discerning and amenable to reason. Their desire is to be good and to enjoy a life crowned with the highest knowledge of the subjective self and the objective world. It would not be sane at all in these days to advocate the principles of *pañcamakāra* and to follow all these in the name of religion. A hypocrite posing himself to be a Bhairava or Śiva-like on earth but actually a licentious one may sing its glories now to indulge, as the *Kapālikas* once did, in the pleasures not sanctioned in society. In actual practice the Sādhanā with the help of *pañcamakāra* has been given the goodbye. The Tantras have imparted to it a new character under the name of *divyacara*, the godly rites in place of *kṣyacora* or the rites to be performed by one bound in the meshes of animality. And what is this *divyacara* will be explained as we advance. In the meantime the common belief that the Tantras sanction immoral practices should be jettisoned for good. It was necessary to bring round the people in the distant past ; it would be sheer insanity to prescribe the same remedy in these days.

The Hindu Tantras, if we can use the term, took up the thread of religious advancement whence the Tantras in their original form had left it. The Tantras in their original from did not recognise any distinction between man and man but with the march of civilization and accumulation of wealth in some hands the society was studded with the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the wise and the unrefined, and so on. These distinctions had to be accepted and to be synchronised with philosophical doctrines. The Tantras held the equality of man and woman in every respect and looked at the woman-folk with respect as the society was then matriarchal. The marriage system was loose, and anybody could marry anybody and could separate in case of disagreement without much trouble. Both the parties were free to re-marry as they liked. It was left for the Brahmanism to make a bold departure in introducing social reforms and attempt a new line of solution. For the well being of society and to elevate the moral standard of the people, hard and fast marriage rules were formed, social work for all, according to their abilities and needs, was enunciated and so on. The Tantric doctrines have been retained and reformed wherever needed to suit the requirements of the growing society and to hasten its advance in all possible ways. Last but not the least in importance is that the Hindu Tantras have given a new character to the *pañcamakāra* practice by substituting it by *divyacara*, as already mentioned. But tradition dies hard. Our prevailing social manners and customs, if analysed, will reveal that very many of them are persisting in the exact form or in a modified form even to this date from old time. In the *divyacara* there are graded practices which are reminiscent of the original *ācāras*. This process of refinement has been affected in Bengal under the leadership of saints like Ramprasad, Ramkrishna, Kamalakanta and others of holy name and revered memory.

The Buddhist Tantras have a separate history and we shall take them up in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER V

TANTRA AND THE SĀṄKHYA PHILOSOPHY

There is marked difference between the teachings of the Tantras and those of the Sāṅkhya philosophy. And yet there is a wrong belief, even among many educated people that the Tantric religion is based upon the system of Sāṅkhya philosophy. Nothing can be more erroneous than this. This arises out of the fact that certain terms used both in the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy and in the Tantras convey quite different meanings, sense and interpretation. The terms Puruṣa and Prakṛti are the most outstanding instances. Even the significance attached to these terms in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata differs widely from that imparted in the Sāṅkhya.

In the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy, Puruṣa is not the Supreme Soul of the universe, as Śiva is in the Tantric religion. Sāṅkhya's Puruṣa is not Indivisible. Infinite, Eternal Brahma, but is a multitude of souls, like the Monads of the famous German philosopher and mathematician Leibnitz. This Puruṣa (or the multitude of souls) exists with Primeval Prakṛti, but is itself inert and inactive and unable to produce anything whatever. It is united with Prakṛti in order to contemplate her and to be abstracted from her. Thus difference between Śiva and Puruṣa of Sāṅkhya is obviously clear. Again, according to the Sāṅkhya philosophy, the prime cause of this visible universe is Nature which exists from eternity. It is She who engulfs the Puruṣa in sorrows and miseries. But according to the Sāṅkhyakāra She operates only at the will of the Puruṣa. Only when the Puruṣa sees through the game and remains unruffled and perfectly composed that the Prakṛti ceases to function, At the universal destruction of all things, all the elements are withdrawn and all return to the First cause, *Avyakta*, the indistinguishable one, which is Mūla Prakṛti.

The Tantras, on the other hand, follow the philosophy of the Upaniṣads ; they declare that creation is but the manifestation of of Puruṣottama the Supreme Lord,—His Līlā, a mode of Brahma. At the time of creation both the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti are evolved simultaneously and have their being in Him. At the time of the universal destruction (or *Mahāpralaya*) Puruṣa and Prakṛti become merged in Eternal Brahma. Again, there is a world of difference between Sāṅkhya's Prakṛti and the Śakti of the Tantras. The Tantras call Śakti as Parā Prakṛti, i.e., the personified Divine Energy of the Supreme Deity, in other words, Brahma itself, which is quite distinct from the *Mūla Prakṛti* of the Sāṅkhya system, that holds matter to be eternal and Puruṣa (a multitude of souls) co-existent with it.

According to the Sāṅkhya system, Prakṛti possesses three properties, namely Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas which are present in all persons and objects alike. Creation is evolved from the fusion and agitation, permutation and combination of these three basic attributes in the following order ;—

(1) Prakṛti or the basic Elemental matter.

(2) From Prakṛti proceeds Mahat tattva or the principle of greatness, i.e., Intellect (Buddhi).

(3) From Mahat tattva proceeds Aham tattva or the principle of egoism.

(4) From Aham tattva proceed on the one hand five very subtle elemental things (Tanmātrās)—the Ākāśa (Ether), Vāyu (Air), Agni (Fire), Water and Earth.

(5) And from the Tanmātrās the five Tattvas, e.g., Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell.

(6) On the other hand, from Ahaṁ tattva proceed the five organs of sense and five organs of action which are the instrument of perception of the objective world. The organs of sense are :—(a) Eye, (b) Ear, (c) Nose, (d) Tongue, (e) Skin, while the five organs of action are :—(a) The organ of Speech, (b) The hand, (c) The feet, (d) The excretory termination of the intestines, (e) The organ of generation.

(7) Last but not the least in importance in the runge of creation comes Puruṣa.

Thus according to the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy in the scale of creation Prakṛti stands at the head of all, and Puruṣa at the bottom of all. From Prakṛti takes place the creation commencing from the development of intellect (Mahat tattva) down to gross elements and *indriyas*. On the other hand, according to the Tantras the union of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Śiva and Śakti is necessary for creation. It is Puruṣa or the Eternal Spirit that impregnates matter with life, or breathes life into matter. Again, Sāṅkhya leads to a Dualistic theory but the Tantras, like the Upaniṣads, declare absolute Monism. According to the Tantras, Puruṣa and Prakṛti are but different modes of the manifestation of Eternal and Infinite Brahma—*Sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma*.

Thus the account of creation given in the Sāṅkhya philosophy fundamentally differs from the account of creation given in the Tantras. Sāṅkhya's account of creation is the first Materialistic theory in the world's literature about the creation of universe.

The inter-connection between the tanmātrās, tattvas and indriyas is given below :

The Ākāśa tanmātrā is the store-house of sound which lies undifferentiated there. From its sāttvic portion develops the ear, from its rājasic portion the organ of speen and from its tāmasic portion the various sounds Thus the ear hears the sounds and the mouth can utter them.

The Vāyu tanmātrā is the store-house of the various sensations of sound which is undifferentiated there. From its sāttvic, rājasic and tāmasic portions develop respectively the skin, hands and the various sensations of touch, e.g. softness, hardness, heat and cold. Thus it is that skin can be touched and gives the sensation of touch while the hands can touch the skin.

Eyes are formed from the sāttvic portion of fire, legs from the rājasic portion and the forms (the object of sight) from the tāmasic portion., Thus eyes see the objects of sight and legs carry them to the spot where forms are.

The tongue, the organ of taste, is formed out of the sāttvic portion of water, the organ of reproduction from the rajasic portion and taste from the tamasic portion. Thus tongue experiences tastes of different nutritious objects while the organ of reproductiou is stimulated and discharges the essence.

Nose, again, is formed out of sāttvic portion of the Earth, anus from the rājasic portion and odours from its tāmasic portion. Thus nose smells odours while anus discharges foul matter.

Again, it first propounded the evolutionary theory of creation.[1] The Sage Kapila, the founder of the Sāṅkhya system. denies the existence of God :—*Iśvarāsiddhe*—(the existence of God is not proven). The great commentator of Sāṅkhya, Vijñāna Bhikṣu, adds to the above-quoted aphorism—*Īśvarāsiddhe Pramāṇābhāvāt*—*i.e.*, for want of proof the existence of God, in not proven the great author of the Sāṅkhya system traces the origin of every thing to primeval matter which exists from eternity. Prakṛti at the time of creation like a tortoise, puts forth her limbs, and at the time of the universal destruction withdraws them within her shell. Thus Prakṛti is all in all.

We have already said that, here we first met with the enunciation of the modern scientific doctrine of Indestructibility of Matter. According to the logical conclusion of Vedānta philosophy also matter is indestructible, not of course in the sense of Sāṅkhya, but in the sense that it is a mode of divine manifestation of Brahma. Matter ever changes its forms, but its essence at the end merges into God, because creation itself is a mode of God, a part of Brahma and evolved by Him. But matter is transitory, the only Eternal Reality is Brahma.

Sāṅkhya's Puruṣa is not thus the Eternal, Infinite Spirit, as is generally understood in philosophical terminology. Neither the terms Puruṣa and Prakṛti have been used exactly in the sense of Matter and Spirit of the Western systems of philosophy,[2] nor do they convey the same meaning in which they have been used in Hindu Scriptures.[3] Puruṣa is quite a non-entity in the Sāṅkhya system ; it plays no part in creation nor in destruction. It is a mere sight-seer, a mere spectator to witness the phenomena of Prakṛti.

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[1] The Law of Evolution was first discovered and established in India, like the Law of gravitation. It is, again, the ancient Hindus that invented the method of numerical notation, viz., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, that lies at the root of human advancement not only in science and mathematics, but also of human civilisation and culture in general.

[2] Vide Dr. Draper's classical book, *History of The Intellectual Development of Europe*.

[3] Vide the first Śloka of the 13th Chapter of the Gītā :—"Prakṛtim Puraṣaṁ caiva Kṣetraṁ Kṣetrajñam eva ca/Etad veditumicchāmi Jñānaṁ Jñeyaṁ ca Keśava."

Thus it is wrong to believe that Tantric religion or the Tantras rest on the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy. Not only in the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, but in many other sacred texts of the Hindus, as in Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the terms Puruṣa and Prakṛti have been used in the sense of Brahma and the creation.

Again, we have already seen that the Sāṅkhya system denies the very existence of God, but the Tantras, like other religious texts assume the existence of God as the very axiom of religion. The Tantras believe the existence of one and one God alone [1] *Sarvaṁ khalvindam brahma.* The Mahānirvāṇa Tantram (Chapter II Verses 38-42), thus declares :—"He is the Cause of our being," says, Śiva to Pārvatī, "the Cause of all creatures, He is the sole Supreme Lord, by virtue of his having brought every object into being. He is Brahma and is known among the people as the Creator. And it is on account of His so willing, O Goddess, Viṣṇu is the Preserver and myself am the Destroyer of the universe, and the guardian gods of the worlds, with Indra at their head, are all under his sway."

This account of the creation given in the Tantras, is in essence, the same as given in the Upaniṣads ; and this is what the Upaniṣads say about the creation.

A learned translator of the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra has written the following :—

"The Tantric theory of creation is thus at one with the Sāṅkhya's Prakṛti, the material cause of the universe. It is the creative energy of God—the First cause from which everything has proceeded. The only difference is that according to the Tantric system Prakṛti is more popularly the name of the Goddess, whereas in Sāṅkhya it is the first creative energy." We have fully shown how Prakṛti, or the material cause of the univere, emerges out of

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[1] Only Buddhism is not distinctly clear on this point, Buddhism bears greater affinity to Sāṅkhya philosophy than any other religion specially in its ideal of emancipation or Nirvāṇa. According to Sāṅkhya, absolute exemption from all the three sorts of pain (proceeding from self, from external object and from divine causes) is the highest purpose of the soul; by means of Jñāna or perfect knowledge final beatitude is attained, which consists in the idea that "Neither I am; Nor is aught mine; Nor do I exist." This is, in fact, Buddhist Nirvāṇa.

Brahma. So Prakṛti is not eternal, it has its origin as well its end in Eternal Brahma who alone is the only Reality—Eternal and Infinite.

The learned translator, again, continues, "As in Sāṅkhya so in Tantra, creation proceeds from union between Nature (Prakṛti) and (Soul)." Puruṣa has here been wrongly described as the Universal Soul in the philosophical sense of the term. Again, in Sāṅkhya, Puruṣa is a multitude of souls, and it plays no part in the act of creation, which is the sole business of Prakṛti in the Sāṅkhya.

The learned translator further writes, "This union between nature and soul is thus symbolically described in the Tantras. The great Śakti or Prakṛti after casting off the cover of Māyā, divided herself into two—Śiva and Śakti. The first issue of their union was Brahma. After his birth, the great Śakti said, 'Merry yourself, O great hero." Hearing her words Brahma said, "Save thee, I have no mother. I will not marry. Confer on me thy Śakti (energy)." Hearing it she created out of her own energy a charming maiden and said, "She is great Vidyā and her name is Sāvitrī. Do you spread Vedas and works of creation on earth with her ?"

"Next was born Viṣṇu, pervaded by the quality of Sattva (goodness). The mother said to him, 'Marry, for seeing you, people will be shorne of desire.' On his declining to marry any body, she conferred on him a maiden, named Mohinī created out of her own portion and said, "This Śakti is Vaiṣṇavi, engage yourself with her in the great work of preservation.'

"Then was born the third son who was a great yogin and whose name was Sadāśiva. The great Śakti united herself with him and was engaged in the work of destruction."

The learned translator, as a comment upon this Tantric myth, observes : —"From the above symbolical representation, it is evident that not only the work of creation but even that of preservation and destruction is an outcome of union of Prakṛti with Puruṣa. Thus Prakṛti or the Mahāśakti, as the Tantrics designate Her, is the creative power of the Almighty."

This is a very pertinent and cogent comment no doubt but it does not at all apply to the cardinal doctrine of the Sāṅkhya system.[1]

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[1] This is too liberal an extension of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, and the sentences that follow repeat the philosophical conception of the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas and not strictly of the Sāṅkhya system.

Now, along with the former observations, the learned translator has added the following :

"Tattva or essential principles are thus described in Tantras. There are five elements and every element has five qualities or Guṇas. Bones, flesh, nails, skin and hairs of the body belong to earth ; semen, blood, marrow, excretion and urine belong to water ; sleep, hunger, thirst, fatigue and idleness belong to fire ; holding, moving, throwing and withdrawing and giving birth to children belong to air ; lust, anger, stupefaction, shame and avarice belong to ether."

But, we have already seen that these are not identical with the Tattvas of the Sāṅkhya.

"According to the Tantric teachers," the learned translator adds, "five elements produce not only the component parts of the physical frame but also emotions and passions which are innate in man."

CHAPTER VI

PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP

Worship is inseparable from religion. There cannot be any kind of religion, without worship, apart from an abstract philosophical speculation which is, of course, no religion at all. Forms of worship differ according to our religious concept,—according to its crudity or sublimity. The necessity of worship is recognised by all religions, without which religion remains, at best, as an ideal belief, merely a thing of profession. It should be noted here that there are very few theoretical atheists but most of us are practical atheists, because, for want of worship religion becomes an idle drapery of the mind. Absence of worship, and laxity in worship undermine the religious belief which we profess to hold. In truth, there cannot be any religion without worship. They are conjoined like matter and force. They are not only correlated but co-existent. Hence worship, though its form may vary in thousand and one ways, is the prime expression of a religious belief. A religion is inseparable from its dogmas. A particular form of worship is certainly a dogma of a particular religion. Thus it is clear that worship is the essential part of religion which with the element of worship may be characterised in Coleridge's words, "You believe." Yes, nothing more thanl a sheer idle belief. But true religious belief in its effect and its dynamical energy is imparted by worship. It is worship, or spiritua exercise, that keeps a religion alive and prevents it from sinking into a dead formula of religion or a lifeless belief. A cold philosophical creed is not religion. It is neither solacing, nor inspiring. It is worship that ennobles the mind, enriches the heart with spiritual wealth, and beautifies life with tender graces. Nay more, its value is even greater ; it enhances our concentration and devotion and helps us to realise the glory of God, and like all moral discipline, it contributes the perfection of the soul which is the goal of every higher religion, as it is indispensable for ultimate emancipation.

The true soul of religion consists in practice, in other words, in worship. We should also remember this incontrovertible fact, that though the lofty philosophy of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads lies at the root of the highest forms of Hinduism, such as Śavism, Śāktism and Vaiṣṇavism, yet neither Śaivism, Śāktism nor Vaiṣṇavism is identically one with the metaphysical doctrines of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, and its reason is obvious. Vedānta, in its uncompromising *Advaita* form declares : *Soham* ; *Tattvamasi* ; *Ayamātmā Brahma* ; *Aham Brahmāsmi, i.e.*,—I am He ; Thou art He ; Thy Soul is Brahma ; I am Brahma.

The great Śaṅkara has also declared *Śivoham, Śivoham.* Now, the vital principle of religion consists in worship, which cannot be consistent with absolute Monism. Religion and religious worship imply at least a conditional Dualism. The devotee identifies himself with his Deity. There is always a conscious difference between the votary and the Deity. We do not know, nor have we ever heard where in religious practice, or worship, the devotee identifies himself with his Deity. We find the greatest sages and the greatest saints all over the world, from the earliest time till now, being absorbed in meditation and contemplation of their Deity and engaged in worship or prayer. This fully demonstrates that in religion and in its practical application, the devotee always thinks himself lesser than the Deity with whom he wants to be united at the end. Philosophy may establish identity between man and God, but religion is not pure philosophy ; it is something more. Even at a most casual and superficial glance the vital difference between philosophy and religion will be detected. Highly emotional and strong connate elements that constitute the vital breath of a living religion, are entirely absent from philosophy, though all higher religions are based upon different schools of philosophy.

Even the great Śaṅkara, the upholder of the highest form of Monism, is found engaged in worshipping his Deity. His great hymns of glory in honour of Śiva and Śakti testify to the undeniable fact that in religion and religious worship we must put aside an uncompromising Monism. and assume, at least, a conditional Dualism. We do not know if one can worship his own soul, because it is identical with Brahma. Such an instance has not yet been found, though, of course, self-realisation is the highest fruit of religion and it is the goal of all the higher forms of Hindu religion, because it is by knowing our own Soul that we can know Brahma or God. Raja

Ram Mohan Roy who revived *Advaitism* of Śaṅkara, held that even for a spiritually emancipated man, God remains an object of worship to him, because Brahma is greater than man. Maharṣi Devendra Nath Tagore, the illustrious father of Rabindra Nath Tagore, vehemently opposed absolute Monism that obliterates all difference between God and man.

True, I am He but I am not quite identical with Him. Even the Upaniṣads make this clear.

"As tiny sparks emerge from a blazing fire, so from that Paramātman (the Universal Soul) all lives, all worlds, all gods and all creatures are evolved:"

—Bṛhadāraṇyaka 1-2-20

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa also says in the Gītā :—

"A part of mine exists in the living world as eternal life."

Gītā 15-1.

Of course, Brahma or the Eternal Soul of the Universe is individual. The finite soul is a part of the infinite soul, but that finite soul is imprisoned in time and space. "Man," says Carlyle, "is the symbol of eternity imprisoned in time." Just as empty space of the sky and that within a pot are the same, so are Brahma and the finite soul, declare the Hindu Śāstras :—

"Ākāśamekaṁ yathā ghaṭādiṣu pṛthag bhavet," But religion, implies and interprets this Monism that I am not identical with Him, but only a part of him ; a tiny bubble in the Ocean of light that rises from the breast of the Ocean and bursts on it.

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad also declares thus : "As thousands of sparks of the same nature are emitted by a well ignited fire, so from that imperishable Puruṣa (Prahma) diverse creatures are evolved and dissolved in him "

—Māṇḍūkya 2-1-1,

The Tantras also preach identity of the individual and the Absolute much in the strain of the Upaniṣads. Yet there is a world of difference as far as the methods of realisation are concerned. While the Vedānta recommends the method of transcendent wisdom, the method of sublime philosophy, the method that could be followed only by men of exceptionally high intellectual and moral attainments, the Tantra prescribes a method helpful even to men of lower epuipments, a method which utilises physical and physiological processes for the attainment of spiritual realisation.

Thus the greatness of God is obvious. In other words, that I am not identical with God, is the fundamental axiom of religion. Religion implies the existence of a Superior Being, greater than its votary. Every form of religion implies some form of dualism though ultimately it may merge into the highest monism. In this sense, what Dean Inge has said is right :—

"God is the beginning of religion and the end of philosophy, and the beginning and the end are one."

—Outspoken Essays.

I am He, no doubt, because there is nothing but God, there is nothing outside God; the very creation is made of Brahma, the universe lies in him, yet the universe is not God. Hindu philosophy does not end in Pantheism, but is immanent and transcendent. It seems to us, the highest of impertinence to declare that I am the Absolute.

Once more let us make ourselves clear that I am He in the sense as has been used in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad : 'I am a spark like a thousand other sparks emitted by a blazing fire.' A spark is undoubtedly of the same nature and of same quality with the blazing fire itself, but far less than the blazing fire, the origin of the spark. Thus the difference between a purely monistic philosophical theory and a religious creed is quite obvious.

Again, the difference between a purely philosopical creed and religion is immense. Religion is rich with emotional elements, whereas philosophy is absolutely devoid of them; where philosophy leaves us cold, it is religious faith that buoys up our depressed soul, inspires it with hope and quickens it with love. It is religion that upholds the drooping spirit, and uplifts the mind from the mire of impurity, chastens our life and checks our lower desires. It is religious ardour that has richly contributed to the melody of the minstrels' songs, and inspired the artists to put forth their best. It is not cold philosophy, but religion, that has contributed to the wealth of poetry, printing, music, sculpture, architecture, and to all noble and tender qualities of the heart. It has inspired the hero to lay down his life cheerfully for his faith, it has spurred chivalrous feelings and gallantry in the knight; nay more, it has taught the common people to bear patiently all ills and sufferings of life and to look forward to a better and brighter state of things.

in future. It has taught man not to think this world to be the be-all and end-all" of every thing. It has changed man's angle of vision and his attitude towards the world and thereby has greatly modified his concept about life and the goal of his earthly existence. Again, it is religion that inculcates a spirit of sacrifice. It requires sacrifice of our selfish interests for higher good and for the welfare of the world. All that is low, sordid or mean should be sacrificed for our spiritual bliss. It is religion that supplies the true motive of altruism and not any thing else. No system of philosophy, however high, has been able to effect even one hundredth part of what religion has achieved in the world.

Again, philosophy is static, whereas religion is quite dynamic in its potentiality. It had inspired in the past men to noblest actions as well as to cruel persecutions in countries among people where there were no catholicity of views and toleration for another's belief and it will continue to do so in future.

It is worship again that renders a religious faith sacred, the most distinctive feature that distinguishes it from all other secular beliefs. This sacredness of a religious faith is the most important element. This renders "the religious objects as sacred and the corresponding religious attitude and action in regard to the sacred as is held to conduce to the welfare of the community or to that of the individuals as members of the community."

Now, what is meant by "Sacred"? Its meaning differs in different religions. It may mean what is purfying and conducive to spiritual welfare, or it may mean what is secret or mysterious. Again, what is sacred to me, may be an abomination to you, or quite an indifferent thing to another. Please mark the sentence "as is held to condone to the welfare of the community or to that of individuals as members of the community." This is exactly, in purport, the import of the Sanskrit term Dharma : that is religion which preserves all creatures from harm and contributes to their welfare.

Now, we have already remarked that it is worship that keeps a religion alive. The Tāntric creed, like the Vedas, lays great stress upon the forms of worship which are calculated to contribute greatly to our spiritual welfare and moral perfection.

Jaimini's Mīmāṁsā system of philosophy enjoins that religion consists in the performance of rites and rituals prescribed in the

Vedas : *Codanālakṣaṇārtho Dharmaḥ*; likewise, the Tantras lay very great stress upon certain prescribed forms of worship which are calculated to promote one's spiritual welfare and enhance concentration of mind and devotional ardour, and are also designed to develop sychic powers, will-force and strength of mind which are necessary for self-restraint under great tempattions. The Tantras thus speak of some Yogic Sādhanās (modes of worship and prayer) that will bestow on the devotee great yogic and occult powers and will lead him to higher spiritual plane. The question that naturally arises : Is this true ? The answer is given in the most affirmative form by the great Yogins and the Sannyāsins, whose occult powers are as established facts as any other undeniable facts of nature. An ounce of fact is better than a pound of theory. Here the Tantras are at one with Patañjali's Yoga Darśana which speaks of practical sādhanas; Practise them and you will acquire great yogic powers. You cannot deny the truth of these propositions without practising them. They require practice, they cannot be proved or disproved by theoretical discussions. The great Yogins and Sannyāsins of India are the living evidence of their truth, and one cannot deny the efficacy of Tāntric Sādhanā and Tantric worship without following them. The life of Ramakrishna Paramahaṁsa of our time will show to what a great spiritual height a man can rise by Tāntric Sādhanā and also what great and wonderful occult or yogic powers can be attained by him. A tree is known by its fruit. We shall speak about some of these Tāntric Sādhanās or rites and rituals, known as the occult secrets of the Tantras. One thing should, however, be noted that Sādhanā or Yoga is not peculiar to the Tāntric religion. Yoga or Sādhanā is to be found in every system of higher Hindu religion. It is common to the Śaivas, Śāktas, though it predominates in a prepondering degree in the Tāntric from of worship. Occult powers are attained by the development of higher spiritual powers by Sādhanā or Yoga. You cannot deny the existence of a thing that does really exist, by any jugglery of words. The Tantras, like the Yoga Darśana of Patañjali, deal with practical things and they stand above all formal literary criticism. No logical clap-trap can assail them. You are to prove or disprove their truths by practising them. Swedenberg might have been the only mystic in Europe but there are hundreds and thousands of Swedenbergs among the Indians who ever live in close communion with the Deity, and whose occult powers naturally result from Yoga or Sādhanā. Call them mystics, if you like, but mysticism, in strict sense, is a phenomenon of highly developed religion. "Individualistic in character, it is the outcome of a longing for intimate communion with the Divine." This definition of mysticism given in the Encyclopaedia Britannica is, in essence, exactly the same that we come across in Patañjali's Yoga Darśana and in the Tantras; it is the result of close and ardent communion of the devotee with his Deity. We shall deal with it later on. The power is in you; it is in every human being; but it lies dormant. It is by religious practice, by Yoga and Sādhanā, you are to awaken it.[1] It does not come from outside, but lies in us. Culture and practice with pure spiritual fervour and religious ardour are necessary to make its latent potentialities patent and active. The Tantric principle of worship, however, differs widely from the Upaniṣadic and Purāṇic principles of worship which we have explained above. We shall therefore discuss briefly the succint points of worship which distinguish the Tantras both from the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas.

The very first *mantra* uttered by the Tāntric worshippers in commencing a religious rite is technically known as *ācamana mantra*, *i.e.*, mantra to purify oneself. The entire Tantra philosophy is condensed in that mantra. It is enchanted by the worshipper as to have a complete idea before the mind's eye of the communion. The mantra is *Ātma-tattvāya* svāhā, *Śivatattvāya svāhā*, *Śakti tattāya svāhā*. Variation is sometime made by substituting the word Vidyātattvāya in place of Śaktitattvāya. This clearly indicates, to what tune must a worshipper adjust himself before he can be expected to conduct worship up to the standard prescribed by the Tantras.

By *Ātma-tattvāya svāhā* is meant that the self in the worshipper is no other than the consciousness within him, of which a passing reference has been made in a previous chapter. The worshipper has for the time being to forget himself and to realise that all his activities, physical, mental and sub-conscious, proceed from the almost imperceptible consciousness in him. The very idea 'I exist' which is the very foundation of all animal and human experience and of all boastful assertions regarding their powers and capacities is an emanation of consciousness within. Our senses which are instruments of our perceptions, infinite in variety, cannot function of themselves without the contract of consciousness, which is the real hearer, seer, etc. Consciousness is, therefore, not to be confused with mind; it generates the mind and sets it to function. It is not a product of *prāṇa* as the Westerners are prone to believe; it activates the *prāṇa* when one is asleep, and loses himself as also all ideas of time and place. It is the consciousness within that awakens him to have sense-perceptions over again. Our eyes do not see; when consciousness wishes to see, the eyes originate; and this holds good in the case of the other senses, mind and *prāṇa* as well.

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[1] In this connection the reader may read Maurice Maternlinck's noble Laureate drama, *Mrnna Vana* and see how subconscious powers can work wonder.

Hence, it is the teaching of Tantras that the senses, mind and *prāṇa* are not to be considered as belonging to the body but to the conscious Energy within. Every perception and every experience come direct from Him and as such the Supreme Deity is perceivable in every thought, feeling and realisation. And this is the special contribution of the Tantras Our whole body is every moment being flushed with divine energy. Every nerve, every tissue, every body cell owe their existence and growth to this. Seeing this whirlpool of energy at every point of the material body, how long can a *jīva* maintain his individuality? It is bound to be dissolved in the energy within. A drop of water cannot acquire the sea neither can it maintain its separate existence in the presence of the sea. So the *jīva* according to the Tantra does not become Brahma but becomes temporarily one with him, which is the basic principle of *Samādhi* and is absorbed in Ānandamayī after leaving off the mortal coils. This point we shall elaborate as we advance and shall now proceed with the fundamental philosophy of Tāntric religion.

CHAPTER VII

FUNDAMENTAL CREED OF THE TANTRAS

The Supreme Being is admitted by all religions as an inscrutible power. He is neither this nor that. He, She and It are equally applicable to him. He is beyond the conception of our mind; we cannot think of anything which has no form, no attribute, no action whatsoever, which is eternal and infinite and devoid of all material and mental attributes. The Upaniṣads declare that He was beyond our thought, beyond our conception He is beyond the reach of words, of mind and of vision :—*naiva vācā na manasā prāptuṁ śakyo na cakṣuṣā.*

—*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 3-12

So also declares the *Taittarīya* :—

Yato vācā nivartante aprāpya manasā saha—whence speech with mind comes back baffled, *i.e.*, He is beyond our conception and is indescribable. The Eternal, Infinite, Indeterminate Brahma,[1] devoid of all names, forms and attributes is beyond human conception. So also says the great German poet, Goethe, in his Faust :—

Who dare express Ḥim?

—Faust, part, Sc. XVI.

Yet the Vedas and the Upaniṣads do not end in Agnosticism. They are full of living faith and devotional ardour : nowhere else we find deeper religious fervour. The great sages knew the limitations of human intellect; they were fully acquainted with the psychology of human mind. They knew that in order to think of

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[1] The Sanskrit word Brahma is untranslatable in English. Īśvara can be translated by the term God, for God in Christian Theology, is what Īśvara is in Hindu Philosophy, *i. e.*, a Personal God with attributes.

God, we must impute attributes to him, God must be rendered an object capable of comprehension by the human mind, and this we can do only by our inference and imagination. God, in order to be an object of human conception, cannot be an Attributeless, Impersonal Spirit—Eternal and Infinite,—of which we can form no adequate idea whatsoever. Such a God is beyond the realisation of human mind All learned attempts to expresss the Eternal and Infinite God remain but idle expressions—'Words, words'—having no significance whatsoever. "The Word," says Prof. Tiel, "must become Flesh in order to get admission into human heart." Our religious creed depends more upon our hope and imagination than upon anything else. We are not always worshippers of reason. It is our hope for something better in future that urges us towards our goal. We may be right, we may be wrong, but hope that springs eternal in human breast lies at the root of all religious creeds. We may blunder, we may bungle with our life, we may be misled by our own ideas, but still we hope that everything will be righted at the end, every wrong will be redressed and every error rectified. It lies at the root of our devotion and faith. It fills us with ardent fervour. It kindles our imagination and warms our heart. It is hope that carries us forward and that leads us through troubles and tribulations of life. This also holds good in case of our religious belief. This hope and belief in the ultimate good after sore disappointments and suffering is the motive force that carries as along the path of duty, and the path of virtue and raises us from all dejection and despair. When light fails, when there is none to lead us, when all appeals for help become a cry in wilderness, when we sink under doubts and despair, it is belief that everything will be righted at the end, sustains and upholds our drooping spirit and fills us with enthusiasm, hope and courage to face the grim ordeals of life. It is here that religion holds its triumph over all and every other thing. There is nothing else that is so inspiring, so healing and so consoling in our sore moments of afflictions and troubles as a religion. And the Tantras lay great stress upon this element of religion. The common idea of a personal God among the people is that of an Almighty Governor of the universe, who is kind to His devotees, the Distributor of reward and punishment to men after their death. And one generally thinks of Him as the Sovereign Lord of the universe holding His royal court in the blissful region of, heaven ! Thousands of angels wait upon Him. This is what even the great poet Milton thought of god :

—His state
Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and occean without rest,
They also serve Him who only stand and wait.

This is after all, a magnified picture of a mighty, earthly king. It is, at bottom, an anthropomorphic idea of God. It is our concept or image that we deify and instal as Godhead. We can hardly get rid of our own shadow, however much we may try. But what is the real image of God ? Is God a magnified and a glorified human being ? Surely not. It is the creation of our mind, and one man's concept differs from that of another, though there may be greater similarity between the two. There are men who cannot think of a youthful God, but only of a God quite venerable in age and wisdom ! This is, of course, due to our own limitations of imagination and intellect. It is we that impute different qualities or attributes to God, just to think of Him and to moditate upon His glory. Of course, all attributes are the attributes of God, for everything is God, and there is nothing outside God. Primary and secondary qualities are but a mode of Divine manifestation. Hence, all the attributes that we see around us and all that we can imagine or infer to exist are the attributes of God. God is, therefore, both attributeless and with attributes: *Paraṁ ca aparaṁ ca Brahma*, so says Praśna Upaniṣad. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa declares, "Saguṇa Viṣṇu". Brahma without attributes is known as Nirguṇa Brahma and Brahma with attributes is known as saguṇa Brahma, the creator, supporter and destroyer of creation. The sage Śaṅkarācārya says :—*Dvirūpaṁ hi Brahma avagamyate, Nāmarūpādhiviśiṣṭam, tad viparitañca sarvopādhivarjitam.* Brahma has two forms—one with name and form and the other, devoid of all forms and names.

In the Upaniṣads, the distinction between attributeless Brahma and Brahma with attributes has been expressed by the use of Neuter and masculine genders. Attributeless Brahma is designated by the Neuter gender and Īśvara or Brahma with attributes by the Masculine gender.

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1. The great French writer Jubert has also said in this sense ; God is God because He stands above proof.

"Santi ubhyaliṅgā śrutayo Brahmaviṣayāḥ"

Thus also the Bṛhad Āraṇyaka declares :—

"Dve vāva Brahmarūpe; mūrtaṁ cāmūrtaṁ ca, sthitaṁ ca, yat ca, sat ca, tat ca."

"Brahma has two aspects, manifested and unmanifested, perishable and imperishable, with motion and devoid of motion, both with attributes and without attributes."

This idea of a creator supporter, a moral governor of the creation and also of the final cause of destruction is what we find also in the Tantras. "He is without modification, and self-supporting. He is without difference, above attributes,—the Witness of every thing, the Soul of all.—seeing all that is, and endowed with divine powers. He lies hidden in every being and is eternal and all-pervading. He it is that manifests organs as well as attributes, although Himself is without any organ. He is above all the worlds and is their cause. He is beyond the reach of speech or thought, knowing everything. He knoweth this universe but none knoweth him."

—*The Mahānirvāṇa Tantram*, Ch. II, V 35-37.

Again, it further says :—He is the cause of our being, the cause of all creatures. He is the sole Supreme Lord by virtue of His having brought every object into being. He is Brahma and is known among the people as the Creator. And it is on account of His so willing that, O Goddess, Viṣṇu is the Preserver and myself the Destroyer of the universe, and the guardian gods of the worlds, with Indra at their head are all under His sway.

—*Ibid*, Chap. II, Verse 30-41

Since Brahma is both with attributes and devoid of them, One is at liberty to have a personal God after his own liking. One generally thinks of God like what he or she revers or considers to be the highest, or the most glorious, or the most perfect. Now, the Hindu Śāstras make the greatest allowance in this matter. One's concept is as good as that of another, because all our concepts about God, however high, must necessarily be inadequate. This cardinal truth was realised by the great sages of India. What reasonable objection may you have if my idea of God differs from that of yours ? Yet this has been the prime cause of all religious strifes and even of sanguinary wars !

The Hindu Śāstras, again, differ in one important feature from the scriptures or other religions. They declare that God is not an object of fear but of love. One should not only revere and adore God, but also love Him as his own nearest and dearest one. Fear of God, so common in other forms of religion, is not countenanced by the Hindu Śāstras. There is no such phrase as a God-fearing man in Sanskrit. One should love God and adore Him with veneration and love, but not from fear. Hence, the Hindus always sought to establish a closer and nearer relation between God and man—between the devotee and the Deity. There is a degree of respectful distance betwcen the master and the servant, but the relation is far closer between the father and the son. Now God should be the dearest object of love, and man should (at least, he is at liberty) think of God what he considers to be the dearest to him. Among the Hindus, therefore, the relation between God and man is not stereotypedly fixed for all alike. I am quite at liberty to think of Him as I like. Yaśodā loved Śri Kṛṣṇa as her son, the cowherd boys, as their friend; the Vraja Gopis, as their lover. And they were perfectly right like the man who adores God as the Almighty Governor of the universe,—though it must be admitted that in the last-mentioned conception there is more element of awe than of love.

Now, the Tantras emphasise the Motherhood of God. To many people such a concept will appear to be sacrilegious, because they have been taught to look upon God as a Male Being, Master or Lord. But is it not equally absurd and illogical to assign a particularly definite sex to god ? Who can determine it ? Eternal and Infinite Brahma is formless and sexless; again, all forms are His forms, all sexes are His and have been evolved from Him. He is both the Mother and the Father of the universe. The whole creation is an act of emergence from Brahma, call that Brahma Father or Mother as you like; *i. e.*, think of Brahma in the from of what you love most and rever most. The Tantras have preferred to represent Eternal Brahma, as the Eternal Mother of the universe. And why ? The reason is quite obvious. Mother is dearer to the child than the father; again, it is mother who loves more and cares more for the child than the father. Who can deny this? The whole animal world bears most eloquent testimony to this incontrovertible fact, to the superiority of mother's love over all others' love. These hold up the Supreme Deity as the Eternal Mother of the universe, for there is nothing more deep and more disinterested than mother's love. God's love for the creation is like mother's love only more deep, more pure and more disinterested. This concept of the Motherhood of God is as good and logical as that of Fatherhood, for He is both the father and the Mother of the universe.

The Tantras, again, explain the act of creation on the analogy of sexual coition in nature. And it is true that we cannot generally conceive of any other mode of creation : even in the Hermaphrodites the same process goes on. The Tantras, therefore, explain creation as the result of the union between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. The Gītā also, in Chap. XVI, Verse 25, supports this view. In the Hindu Śāstras, this union between Puruṣa and Prakṛti has been symbolically represented by the image of Ardhanārīśvara or Hara Gaurī. Puruṣa and Prakṛti are Śiva and Śakti of the Tantras, of course quite different from the Puruṣa and Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya Philosophy as we have already discussed. Thus the only difference between pure Śaivism and Śākta creed lies merely in the predominance of Śiva in Śaivism, and that of the Śakti in the Śākta creed. Now, the philosophy underlying the Śākta creed may be very briefly put.

God and the universe are inseparable, because they are, at bottom, one and the same. One cannot be taken away from the other. The creation is a mode of Divine manifestation, but this manifestation appears to us in a Dualistic form, in whatever name we may like to designate it. In purely scientific nomenclature, the whole universe appears in the forms of matter and force. There is no matter without force, and no force without matter. And what we practically notice is the play of several forces or different kinds of energy that have brought the universe into existence and which govern all material phenomena of the universe. In other words, we find certain elements and certain kinds of energy that bring about all material phenomena of the universe. We do not know how they themselves have come into existence, not even their nature. All that we know about them is how they work; in other words their laws of operation. We can at best describe them but cannot account for them, *i.e.*, we know not the reason why they behave in such and such matter.

The different kinds of energy that we find working in nature are Light, Electricity, Magnetism, Chemical enegry, Heat and Motion. But science has proved that they are but different expressions of one great energy, for a particular energy can be converted into another form of energy, as heat into light, magnetism into electricity ; and *vice versa*. This is, in scientific terminology, known as correlation of forces. Thus, all these different kinds of energy are but the different modes of expression of one great, Supreme Energy.

Science has, again, proved that all the different elements which were so long held to be immutably fixed in nature, are but the modifications of One great element, known as Protyle : as we find that the element radium ultimately changes into the element lead. All the elements can, ultimately, be resolved into Protones, Positrones, etc. which are identically the same in every element. Now, neither we know the origin of Energy nor the origin of the Elements. Again, there is no element absolutely devoid of energy, nor we meet with an energy without some sort of matter. In other words, matter and energy are inseparable and their ultimate origin is unknown to us. This is what is known in the Tantras as the union between Puruṣa and Prakṛti or between Śiva and Śakti. According to the Upaniṣads the visible universe is a mode of Divine manifestation, hence it is inseparable from Brahma. So what we designate as matter, or energy is nothing but a mode of divine manifestation, Līlā. Hence there is nothing dead or inert in nature, but everything is living and endued with energy. Sir Jagadish Bose's wonderful experiments demonstrate the great truth, long realised by the great Hindu seers of old. God and His energy are inseparable, and what we designate as physical energy is nothing but Divine energy. There is no other energy besides Divine energy. And this is what the Gītā declares that, the light of the sun and of the moon is His energy :

Yadādityagataṁ tejo jagatyābhāsatekhilam/
Yaccandramasi yaccāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam//

"The energy in the sun that lightens the world and the energy that is in the moon and in fire, know that to be my energy."

—Gītā, Chap. XV, Verse 12

Since, we can never separate God from His energy, we cannot separate Śiva from Śakti. Again, it is God with attributes that we worship; nay more, our adoration is mostly due to his Divine attributes; in other words, we worship God more for His Divine attributes than for anything else. To be more explicit, we worship God because He is almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, merciful, etc. Again, it is these Divine attributes that impress upon our mind the greatness of God, and we worship Him for that greatness. Thus, these Divine attributes play a very important part in our religious belief. Now, what are the attributes but so many manifestations of energy ? Thus, Divine energy and its acknowledgment constitute the chief element in religious worship, and, we have already remarked that worship is the life-spirit of religion that keeps it alive. If this be true, the Tantras are perfectly right in giving prominence to the worship of Śakti. It is through the manifestation of certain attributes that we come to know the existence of thing. What has no manifestation has no existence to us. Likewise, it is through the manifestation of Divine energy in the universe that we come to know the existence of God, and this energy is but a mode of manifestation of Brahma. Now, this Energy is Śakti of the Tantras. Who can, therefore, accuse him who worships Brahma as Śakti ? The Śākta worships Brahma as Śakti, or as He appears through the manifestation of His Divine energy, which has been designated and conceived in the Tantras as the Mahāśakti. If a Personal God be the necessary requisite of religious worship, God with his Divine energy or attributes (which alone reveal us His existence), conceived as Mahāśakti, or the Fountain head of all energy and attributes, is parhaps, more profound philosophical concept of Brahma than what we generally meet with in other concepts about God.

It is Divine energy that makes us aware of the existence of God; it is Divine energy that appears as Divine intelligence in the great theological design of creation.[1] Thus the Tantric conception of the Supreme Deity is, rather, a very apt symbolical representation of Brahma with His Divine energy, that has brought the visible universe into existence, that governs, upholds and sustains it, which has been classified and specified by science as the great Laws of Nature. Thus, Cosmic energy is the most tangible thing that at once captures our wayward attention and fills our mind with an overwhelmingly oppressive emotion of deep awe and wonder ? How insignificant is man ! To what a vanishing dot our earth dwindles in the vast abyss of space ! What courtless vistas of time are involved in the formation of the visible universe ! Who amongst us can conceive the Eternal and Infinite, in whom all the worlds exist like beads of pearls in a pearl necklace, *i.e.*, who is transcendent of the vast universe itself ? The Śākta bows down trembling with deep veneration and awe and relieves himself of the oppressive and stupefying emotion by exclaiming with devotion and love, 'Mother ! Mother ! O Great Mother !' In spite of all awe-inspiring majesticity and grandeur, mother's love is always assuring to the child, and it always protects and delivers the child from all fears and feelings of distress. Who has the audacity to laugh at the devotee who, in profound devotion and love prostrates himself before the image of the Divine Mother,—the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe ? Inscrutable power manifested through nature, is Śakti. This power is Brahma, devoid of all names and forms, and one is at full liberty to think of this Supreme Power in any form he or she likes. No image of the Eternal and the Infinite is possible but Viśvarūpa, or the cosmic image of God, with the whole universe lying in Him. Our concept of the Eternal and Infinite Brahma must be limited by the limitations of our imagination and intellect. Therefore, the devotee is fully justified in worshipping God in whatever form he likes.

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[1] Sir James Jeans has observed in The Great Design that the very constitution and working of the universe demonstrate the prominence of Mind over Matter *i.e.*, an intelligent design is more than evident. Science no longer regards the creation as a matter of mere accident, a casual product of primordial matter,

It won't be out of place to mention that the great orator and preacher, the founder of the New Mission Church of Brahma Religion, Keshab Chandra Sen, who was jealous supporter of Brahma religion which took its birth by way of protest against idolatry (as Protestantism rose against the excesses of Roman Catholicism and Papacy), meditated upon the Motherhood of God. and invoked the Supreme Deity as Mother. There is a prayer of Keshab Chandra in Bengali, wherein he prays to God, as a Sākta prays to Śakti, repeatedly calling God as mother with deep emotion and devotional ardour :—"Come Mother, come Mother ! Ah Mother ! make me mad. O, what delicious wine is being served at thy place !" The prayer not only reminds one instantly of Ramprasad and Ramkrishna Paramahamsa (with whom Keshab Chandra came in close touch in the closing years of his life and whom Keshab Chandra held in great regard and esteem) but even the very words seem to be theirs ! Keshab Chandra was deeply imbued with the devotional ardour and love of a true Śākta, worshipping God as the great Divine Mother, Śakti ! Thus, all distinctions and differences in all forms of worship, and between all sectarian creeds vanish away in devotional ardour and love. Ramkrishna Paramahamsa found joy and solace in every form of religion, and he discovered the fundamental unity of all religions in the midst of their great diversities.

Now, there is more subtle and higher process in the Hindu Śāstras than worship, for realising Nirguṇa Brahma, *i.e.*, Impersonal and Indeterminate God, devoid of all forms and names. This consists in realising Brahma by the realisation of our own soul. I am (Cogito ergo sum); I live, I exist, is an incontrovertible truth, but what is this mysterious ? I say, I am not well; my mind is sad; it is my house; he is my son, etc , etc. What is this I ? Does I mean my mind ? Then how can I say, 'My mind is sad ?' It is the mysterious Self or Ego which is both consciously and unconsciously referred to in thought and speech. Now, what is the real nature of this self or soul ? The Hindu Śāstras declare that I am He; a spark from the blazing Fire, a bubble in the Ocean of light. I am indeed a spark, I am indeed a bubble, yet I am of the same nature with the 'blazing Fire' and with 'the Ocean of light',—lesser no doubt but of the same quality, I am like the empty space enclosed in a small jar or pitcher, but the same with the vast empty space of the universe, and when the jar will be broken, it will be one with the empty space of the universe. The great Hindu sages, therefore, have laid foremost stress upon the realisation of soul. By realising my own soul, I shall realise Brahma. But how this soul can be realised ? There is no short cut to it. It is the most arduous thing and the highest achievement in human life. For this, utmost moral and spiritual dicipline, devotion, meditation and prayer are necessary. It can be realised only by Yoga and by nothing else, for which only one in a million is found to be fit. But the Hindu Śāstras also declare that by worshipping Brahma with attributes, *i.e.*, Saguṇa Īśvara, with devotional faith and love, and by self-control and knowledge, one can gradually attain knowledge of Brahma. Of course, there is no royal road to it and he that succeeds, attains the highest emancipation which is the ultimate goal of Hindu religion, that is to be merged into Brahma. Since this is not meant for the people in general, since it is the most difficult thing to achieve, since it is beyond our ordinary capacity and power, there is need for worship and prayer. There is need for a personal God to love and worship, and to concentrate our mind upon Him. Herein lies the logical justification of idolatry.

It is wrong to hold that we can do away with all forms of idolatry from our religion. Why the Church is sacred to the Christian? If God be omnipresent, and if He be present in every object, then every place is equally sacred as the Church. Hence, Carlyle is right when he says that no religion is possible without idolatry. Of course, this does not mean that idol-worship is a necessary factor of religion yet, since I do not worship any idol, have I the right to hate an idolator or to persecute him ? An idolator too worships the same God whom he invokes in his idol. It is wrong belief among the non-Hindus that the Hindus worship idols. Nothing can be more removed from truth than this. It is Brahma, the Eternal and Infinite Brahma, that one worships in his idol, with whom he becomes one in his mind and not the idol itself. Whether such worship is efficacious or not, that depends upon one's devotional ardour and faith. It has been enjoined in the Hindu Śāstras that the votary by placing a flower on his head, should think himself as the Deity that he is going to worship. Now, in such worship, Ramkrishna Paramahaṁsa became so much absorbed in meditation and thought that he very often forgot all differences between the Deity and his own self; so on many an occasion when Ramakrishna was engaged in worshipping his Deity—the Goddess Kālī—he lost all consciousness of any difference between himself and Kālī and appropriated all the articles of worship himself !

Thus, every form of worship, every form of religious creed may be conducive to the highest spiritual bliss, if observed with devotional ardour, sincere faith and love, as many as there are views (*i.e.*, creeds). Religion, in this sense, does not consist in any particular prescribed form of faith, but in devotion and love which one possesses for God.

CHAPTER VIII

ŚIVA AND ŚAKTI

Though the Supreme Deity of the Tantras is known as Śakti, our idea of the Śakti will be incomplete unless we look into the Hindu concept of Śiva. We have already remarked that Śiva and Śakti are quite inseparable, and the one goes with the other. They are not two double-stars, two independent co-existent things conjoined together but Śiva and Śakti are ultimately one and the same, because they are but two modes of the manifestation of the Eternal and Infinite Brahma, as Puruṣa and Prakṛti (not that of Sāṅkhya), *i.e.*, Matter and Spirit which the Tantras have described as Śiva and Śakti.

Śiva and Śakti are inseparable like heat from fire, whiteness from milk, sweetness from sugar, luminosity from the luminaries. In the preceding chapter we used singular number in designating the Deity of the Tantras. The Deity of the Tantras is both Śiva and Śakti, in other words, Brahma and His Divine energy. Therefore, it will be both wrong and inadequate to designate Śakti alone as the Supreme Deity of the Tantras though, of course, greater prominence has been given to Śakti in the Tantras. The reason is obvious, because it is the Divine energy that has brought the universe into existence, and governs it, and it is that which primarly arrests our attention and overwhelms us with wonder and awe. Thus it is but natural that Śakti will occupy the first and foremost place in the Tantras, which have been written to emphasise this aspect of Brahma and to glorify the motherhood of God,—a quite novel view in theology, though as sound and logical as the Fatherhood of God, for Eternal and Infinite Brahma is both the Father and the Mother of the universe. It was left to the Tantras to view Brahma from this angle of vision. There is no mention of it in any other scripture.

God is both the Father and Mother of the universe; and in this very sense, Kālidāsa,[1] in his invocation for using proper expressions, bows down in the first verse of the Raghuvaṁśam to the Father and Mother of the universe, who are united together like a word and its meaning.

"Vāgarthāviva saṃpṛktau vāgarthapratipattaye jagataḥ pitarau vande Pārvatīparameśvarau//

Mallinātha explains *pitarau* as *mātā ca pitā ca, i.e.*, mother and father. In other words, Śiva and Pārvatī, who are inseparably united together, are the parents of the universe.

In philosophical terminology, Śakti is Kinetic energy of Brahma, and Śiva represents the Static aspect of Brahma. The one is inseparable from the other. According to the Tantras, creation is not an illusion, but the creation is real, because it is a mode of Divine manifestation of Brahma and there is, therefore, 'a real nexus between Brahma as cause and the world as effect.' The Tantras do not dismiss the creation totally as Māyā, but regard it as a Conditional Reality. So it is held that the supreme experience is by the self-Śiva of Himself as Śakti who, as such is the ideal or perfect universe, not in the sense of a perfect world of form but of that ultimate formless feeling of Bhāva—of bliss, Ānanda, which lies at the root of the whole world. Thus Śiva and Śakti are inseparable.

This is what the Tantras tell us; Śiva and Śakti are inseparable, though the Tantras, we have already remarked, have emphasised the Motherhood of God—a concept logically as sound as any other philosophical concept of Brahma or God.

Strangely, there is a much confused notion among some people that both Śiva and Kālī are non-Aryan god and goddess; Śiva, the non-Aryan god of ghosts and fiends and Kālī, a demonic goddess of the aborigines of ancient India, in course of time, have crept into Aryan theology and found their places in the pantheon of Āryan gods and goddesses. Please mark they do not occupy any subordinate or insignificant position. But they are the highest of the deities of the Hindu pantheon as Viṣṇu What an absurd idea!

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[1] The Raghuvaṁśa, Kumārsambhava, Meghadūta and the Śakuntalā conclusively prove that Kālidāsa was a Śākta by creed. Thus, it is evident that Tantric creed and Tantric form of worship were in vogue long before Kālidāsa.

First of all, Aryan concepts are too high and too sublime even for an educated man's grasp, not to speak of a wild aboriginal savage. They are the products of highest philosophical reflections. Secondly, it is a notorious fact that the aboriginal tribes are very slow in giving up their religious rites and practices. They keep themselves far from the contact of civilised people and hold fast to their primitive institutions and to their old, accustomed habits of life. In the fastness of hills and mountains, in dense forests, we still come across wild savages in India, the primitive children of the soil, who were driven from their homes by the onrush of the Aryan conquerors. Among these wild tribes uptil now no evidence of the worship of Śiva or Kālī has been found. They still adhere to their primitive religious faith of Animism, and worship stocks and stones. Among these evil spirits, fiends and ghosts still reign supreme. It is the medicine man who with magic and mysterious charms, wards off the evil spirits—often those of their dead enemies—and relieves these aboriginal people from their disease, distress and fears. One may search from the foot of the Himalayas up to the Cape Comorin in vain to find even the slightest trace of any Tantric form of worship, or of Śiva or Kālī among these wild aboriginal people. Not even a phallic symbol of Śiva has yet been found worshipped by these wild tribes. They still worship stocks and stones and propitiate evil spirits by the sacrifice of animals and other gifts. If it were a fact that both Śiva and Kālī were originally god and goddess of the aborigines, one could have very reasonably expected to find some traces of the Tantric rites among these wild savages of India, from whom the Aryans are said to have taken Śiva and Kālī. Nor any Tantric creed is found among the savage tribes. Hence, such a preposterous theory absolutely falls to the ground.

The concensus of intelligent opinion on this vexed subject, as we have discussed in a previous chapter, is however, that Śiva was originally the god of ancient dwellers of India who now go by the name of Dravidians and who were by no means less civilised than the Aryans who came to settle in this land. There was considerable divergence of ideals of the two nations but when the fusion of the two was effected by the genius of the peoples, Śiva was accepted as one of the Trinity of Aryan theology.

Certainly, no definite form can be attributed to indeterminate, Infinite Brahma. All forms are His, all attributes are His attributes, there is nothing besides Him. Therefore, from the Ṛgveda's 'Puruṣa Sūkta' down to the Upaniṣads, it has been declared by the great

Hindu sages, that He has thousand faces, thousand feet, thousand eyes. His eyes are everywhere, His feet are everywhere and wherever there are two persons, there is one more besides the two. This has been most beautifully and most emphatically declared in the Śrīmad-Bhagavad Gītā in its famous description of the Viśvarūpa, that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa revealed to his great devotee, Arjuna.

Then the question arises why different images of Brahma have been conceived by the Hindus ? Before answering the question, we shall first quote the famous apology of the great sage Vedavyāsa asking forgiveness of God. He says : "Thou art without any form, yet I have imagined Thou art equally present at every place, yet I have extolled the sacredness of the places of pilgrimages," Again, the Atharva Veda declares : "All gods find shelter in Him."

Then why have the Hindus imagined so many gods and goddesses. In other words, so many images of Brahma ? The answer is quite obvious. Different images of Brahma have been conceived simply to help the devotee for enhancing his devotional ardour and for augmenting his concentration of mind ; to fill his heart with enthusiasm and inspiration by setting up before him something tangible, symbolically representing certain Divine attributes or certain aspects of Brahma, for which the devotee likes to worship God. Different images have been conceived to suit different tastes and also to represent different attributes of the Indeterminate and Infinite Brahma. Each image (*i.e.*, each god and goddess) has particular significance of its own. Now, let us see in what light the Tantras look upon Śiva and Śakti and what is the inner significance of each of the aforesaid two deities.

What is the highest virtue in man ? There is no unanimity of opinion even about this ! Some say it is charity ;—charity covereth every sin. Some hold it to be truthfulness ; some purity ; some piety and some righteousness. Some, as the ancient Romans did, think it to be valour ; while others all-round perfection. The last-named virtue, that is an all-round perfection, found much preference both among the ancient Hindus and the ancient Greeks, but there is still great difference between the Greek ideal and that of the ancient Hindus. The Greeks were disposed to physical perfection, but the ancient Hindus gave proference to the perfection of the soul above all other kinds of perfection. The outlook of the ancient Greek art corresponds to this view of physical perfection ; of course, that also implied a sound mind in a sound body. But the ancient Hindu idea of perfection is more spiritual or moral than that of the ancient Greeks. One or two solitary instances, like that of Socrates or of Plato, won't make out a case for the whole national mind. Now the ancient Hindus held another virtue to be the highest of all human virtues, that is the virtue of absolute Detachment. In the opinion of the ancient sages of India, detachment, in truth, is the mother of all virtues. If a man be thoroughly detached, all other virtues will necessarily find place in him. He will, thus by nature, be truthful, honest, just, upright, generous and charitable, for there is nothing to which he is attached ; there is no interest uppermost in his mind, he will naturally be thoroughly selfless and absolutely disinterested in his actions and conduct towards others. No joy can elate him, no sorrow can depress him, no suffering or despair can overwhelm him. He is above all earthly joys and sufferings, above all attachments to worldly things. Nothing can swerve him from the path of uprightness and virtue ; no interest can distract his mind. He is thus far above all others. Upon this great virtue of detachment, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has laid the greatest emphasis and stress in his immortal teachings in the Gītā, and his own life was the highest example of detachment from all worldly objects.

Now, the great God Śiva is the highest personification of the virtue of detachment. He is the highest ideal of all Yogins and Sannyāsins. He is the greatest ideal to all those who have renounced the world. Look at his serene and sublime image, white as silver cliff, the emblem of purity, innocence and spiritual light. He is above all temptations. Love for lust, that plays such as a havoc among us, has been reduced to ashes by the fire of his indignation. Gold and ashes are same to him. Poison and nectar have no difference to him. He is immersed in his own self, self-contained and self-contended. He is Brahma, no external stimulus is necessary to stimulate him with gladness. He cannot have any desire for anything, for there is nothing but Him or outside Him. He is the fountain-head of joy. He is Ānanda Ghana Mūrti, *i.e.*, He reels with his own joy, with Bhūmānanda. He is Naṭarāja, the Lore of arts. Thus self-contained and self-contented Śiva is the highest personification of detachment. And this should bo so in the very nature of things, for the idea of detachment is always closely associated with the idea of ultimate end of all worldly things. In other words, the idea that everything is subject to dissolution and death, inspires one with an inspiration of detachment. Nothing lasts, nothing is permanent, and everything melts and vanishes like mist or vapour. all that we love and prize in life will vanish, causiug us disappointment and sorrow. Nothing is immutable or permanent in Nature. What mighty changes our own planet has undergone through millions of ages :—

> "There rolls the deep where grew the tree,
> O earth ! what changes hast thou seen ?
> There where the long street roars, hath been
> The Stillness of the central sea."

Śiva is the great God of Destruction. He is the image of Brahma as the Destroyer of the universe. Terrific destructive forces lie dorment in Him, as if in sleep. The moment they are awake the whole universe will come to its end. His mighty Trident will break the worlds into atoms when he will dance in the frantic joy of destruction, *i.e.*, when the destructive forces will commence their operation, the whole universe will reel in the wild rhythm of the Dance of Death. Then His matted locks will break asunder from their ties and will overcast the sky, and the crescent moon will shake and tremble on his forehead, the vast sky ! He is the Lord of Death, but Himself deathless, the conqueror of death *Mṛtyuñjaya*.

Thus Śiva is the emblem of the Ultimate dissolution of the universe ; to put in Tantric phraseology, Śakti will withdraw the world into Herself and withdraw Herself into the Transcendental Śiva.

Now, the very consciousness that everything is subject to death and decay fills one's heart with feeling of Vairāgya or non-attachment, if not of detachment proper. We then readly realise the vanity of our desires and world attachments and do then also realise that our attachments are vain and will cause us disappointment and sorrow. Hence, there grows instinctively a yearning to be above all attachments ; in other words, a desire for acquiring detachment in life.

Thus, in the fitness of things Śiva, the God of destruction, should also be the highest personification of the virtue of detachment.

Yet, Śiva is not the God of the Yogins and Sannyāsins alone, not the Deity of only of those who renounce the world, but he is the benignant Deity of the householders too. He is God of one and all, He is Śiva *i.e.*, auspicious and benign to everybody. He is Bholānātha—He remembers no wrongs, no sins or transgressions. He forgives and forgets every thing ; so merciful is He. He is again, Āśutoṣa, readily and easily propitiated : not at all a difficult one to please. Such is Śiva, all forgiving ever benign and merciful to man. He is God of no privileged class, no pompous ceremony is necessary for his worship, no elaborate rite needs be observed in his worship, but a wild Dhutura flower (Stramonium flower) will gratify Lord Āśutoṣa. No privileged priest needs officiate in his worship. You can worship him in any way you like, no particular shrine is necessary for his worship, you may have his emblem even under a tree and worship him with only water: He is God of every body, every body has access to him, and every body can touch his sacred image. It is the most unique feature about the image of Śiva. A non-Brahmin is not allowed to touch any Hindu idol or any other image or goddess, except that of Śiva. He is the most democratic of deities. He is not the God of any privileged class, even an untouchable has an excess of him ! He is pleased with all, favours none, rejects none. Every body is welcome to him. He rejects no body's worship ; whoever comes to him with devotion, faith and love receives his blessings and boons. God is ever kind to us and is even ready to bless us, to forgive us ; and He makes no distinction between man and man.

Now, no people like the ancient Hindus were so keenly alive to the transitory character of all worldly things. Hence, they extolled the virtue of detachment over all other virtues. Detachment is the domineering ideal of the Hindus in every walk of life.

The poet Rabindranath, in one of his noble verses, has said, 'O India ! Thou hast taught the sovereign to renounce the sceptre and to retire to the forest (for meditation and prayer).' There was not a solitary Emperor like Marcus Aulerius of Rome among the Hindus, but all the great Hindu kings were great ascetics at heart.

In course of time, the sentiment of detachment filtered down from the highest to the lowest stratum of society ; and by degrees the whole mass became permeated by this sentiment, and this has greatly changed the national character of the Hindus and deeply affected the history of ancient India.

From the earliest time, the attention of the ancient Hindus was directed to the great mystery of Death, and they became alive to the inevitable end of all worldly things. This meditation of the ultimate end made the Hindus a nation of philosophers, as Plato, at one place, has observed, "Philosophy is meditation of death."

The idea of the ultimate end was uppermost in the Hindu mind, so they did not attach much value to worldly success or material prosperity ; and all the Śāstras have laid very great stress upon the virtue of detachment in all phases of life and religion.

But though the ancient Hindus extolled the virtue of detachment over every thing, though their attention from the earliest time was directed to the mystery of death, yet they never gave themselves up to despair. Pessimism does not find any place in Hindu philosophy. Contemplation of death made the Hindus a nation of philosophers, but it did not turn them sceptics or Agnostics. They refused to yield to sceptic doubts.

> "There was a door to which I found no key :
> There was a veil past which I could not see :
> some little talk a while of Me and Thee :
> There seemed—no more of Thee and Me."
>
> —Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat—Fitzgerald

Such a sceptic note was never dominant in Hindu philosophy, religion or art, except in Cārvāka, the world's first uncompromising Agnostic and materialist.

The Hindu sages, on the other hand, emphatically declared : "Hear ye all, ye inheritors of immortality." "Śṛṇvantu Viśve Amṛtasya Putrāḥ." They prayed :—"Tamaso mā Jyotirgamaya"—Lean us from darkness to light.

—Bṛhadāraṇyaka 1-3-28.

Again, they have declared :—"Vedāhametam Puruṣam Mahāntam Ādityavarṇaṁ tamsā Parastāt ;"—I have known the great Being who is light, beyond the bounds of darkness.

They have, again, proclaimed in joy :

> "Apāma Somam amritā abhūma
> Aganma jyotirvidān Devān."

"We have become immortals, we have obtained light, we have known the gods."

Thus a bold note of robust optimism finds its expresson in the Vedas and in the Upaniṣads.

In the midst of mundane changes, the great sages of India sought for what is permanent, imperishable and changeless, and this they found in their own Soul, a spark of Blazing Fire (Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad), a bubble of the Ocean of light. Human soul is but the Universal Soul imprisoned in a mortal frame (*ākāśamekam hi vathā ghaṭādiṣu pṛthag bhavet*). It is a tiny spark of the Blazing Fire (Brahma) ; human soul is a part of the Divine Soul. This, in the words of Max Müller, is the greatest discovery that man had made, and this great truth was discovered by the great sages of India. Therefore, to know one's Self is to know God. The knowledge of Soul is the knowledge of God. "*ātmano vā are darśanena śravaṇena matyā Vijñānena idaṁ sarvaṁ viditam.*"

—Bṛhādaraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2-4-5.

Everything becomes known from the knowledge of the Soul.

Thus to a Hindu, human life is not a meaningless existence. To put in the words of great *yogin*, who is no other than the world famous Swami Vivekananda, "Life is a continual development and unfoldment of Being under circumstances that tend to press it down."

Human life is not a blind existence ; it has an end of its own and that supreme end is to realize Brahma or God.

From the earliest dawn of civilisation, the attention of the Hindus was directed towards this supreme end of human life. This ever-consciousness of the fleeting character of all worldly objects and their inevitable end urged them to set less and less value to material prosperity and worldly success, and a feeling of detachment became more and more prominent in their character. Therefore, God Śiva is the most apt and typical Hindu creation of the embodiment of the virtue of detachment, rather the most appropriate conception of God, consistent with the national character of the Hindus. And this great ideal gradually turned the Hindus indifferent to all vicissitudes of fortune that might befall in their individual lives or in the life of the nation. What Carlyle, in his *Sarter Resartus*, has described as "The Great Centre of Indifference," that comes from a living faith in Divine

Providence, is to be found even in the commonest, illiterate man among the Hindus. Such is the great, traditional heritage of Hindu culture even among the common people ; and this, we believe, is the secret that has preserved the Hindus through centuries of revolutions, anarchy, foreign aggressions and cruel oppressions. The ancient Greeks are dead ; so are the ancient Romans ; only their ruins survive ; but the Hindus are still alive and there exists a distinctly tangible thread of continuity of culture between the Hindus of the Vedic times and of the present age ! It is, in essence and in spirit, the same stream of culture that is flowing among the Hindus from the hoary time of the Vedas down to the present age. And in spite of radical changes in different departments of the life, in spite of all political, social and economic revolutions that divide the Hindus of today from those of the distant past, the Hindus even now cherish and pursue the same great ideals in religion and morality which the great sages of ancient India have enunciated to their country. Such is the wonderful continuity of Hindu culture through thousand and thousand of years.

There is, however, another side of the shield. This indifference to worldly success and to material prosperity has rendered the people apathetic even to improvement and progress. From a false idea of detachment they have grown averse to all exertion and arduous endeavours to fight against adverse circumstances. A dark fatalism rules the majority of the people and they calmly resign themselves to their fate. A feeling of eunui and indolence has possessed the mass. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who, in his divine wisdom, has distinctly envisaged the probable effects that might arise from a false notion of detachment, raised his clarion voice against it in the Gītā and urged the people to do their duties. Duty for duty's sake will teach us the true virtue of detachment, and not cessation from all activities.

Against this baneful feature of lethargy and apathy of the people, the Tantras have urged for worship of Śakti or Divine Energy. Worship of Śakti will disturb the pathetic contentment of the people, rouse them from the stupor of centuries, inspire them with energy to strive and to put one's utmost energy for the attainment of perfectiou and power. And we venture to suggest that Tantric Sādhanā rose by way of protest against abject fatalism which very often renders a mad indolent and apathetic to all kinds of exertions.

And the Tantras declare that the blessings of Śakti can undo fate. With this end, we think, great stress has been laid upon the worship of Śakti, by whose worship the devotee can attain perfection and power, and can thereby annul his fate.

Now, Śakti is almost the reverse of the concept of Śiva. Śiva is Sthāṇu, immovable ; it is in one respect, the concept of Divine energy in its static aspect, motionless, inert and without agitation ; whereas, Śakti is the concept of Divine energy in its dynamic aspect. Śakti is the personification of the Divine Energy that has brought the universe into existence, that preserves it from disruptive forces. In other words, Śakti is the creative and preservative energy of Brahma. Mother Śakti has brought the universe into existence that lay within her, maintains and preserves it from disintegration and dissolution. Whereas, Śiva is the emblem of the destructive forces that lie dormant in the universe. Goddess Śakti is the fullest conception of Brahma in all its aspects, *i.e.*, as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the universe. Creation comes from Brahma, rather it is a mode of Divine existence. It is Divine energy that sustains the universe, that binds the atoms with atoms. Again, Destruction is also an aspect of Divine energy that goes hand in hand with the creative energy. Thus, the creative, preservative and destructive forces are but the three aspects of the Divine Energy that exists in Brahma, for there is nothing outside Brahma. Thus, Śakti is the fullest conception of Brahma. It goes without saying that we cannot think of Brahma thinking of some attribute of Brahma. The great Rāmānuja, the illustrious founder of the *Viśiṣṭa Advaitavāda* holds that the absolutely distinctionless and indeterminate Brahma which Śaṅkara seeks to establish cannot be proved to be real. Thus, for the convenience of thought, there arisen the conception of the Hindu Trinity :—Brahma, as the creator of the universe, is Brahmā ; Brahma as the preserver of the universe is Viṣṇu ; and Brahma as the destroyer of the universe is Rudra or Śiva.

"Ekaṁ sad viprā bahudhā vadanti."

The Brahmins designate that one reality in various names.

We have already said that it is simply ridiculous to ascribe any definite sex to Brahma. *Nirvikalpa*, *Nirguṇa* and *Nirākāra* Brahma cannot have any sex, to say. The universal Soul is sexless. The Upaniṣads also declare that Jīva or soul has no sex : "na strī na pumān eṣa na Caivāyaṁ napuṁsakaḥ." As the apprehension of a formeless, attributeless Brahma is not possible (for every apprehension is in the nature, it is such, and as such implies the presence of particular features), and we think of Brahma with some attributes in our imagination; likewise, we attribute sex to Brahma devoid of all attributes, we have already said, Brahma has been designated by the neuter gender in the Upaniṣads. Now, logically speaking, Brahma is both the Father and the Mother of the universe; and Mahā-Śakti is the fullest conception of Brahma with the three *Guṇas*—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—the personification of the creative, preservative and destructive forces of the universe. Permit us to quote from the *Devī Bhāgavat* a hymn named *Sarva-viśva-janani.*

(1)

"I call to mind the Mother of the whole universe
Who has created this world both real and unreal,[1]
Protects it having destroyed it, she then plays.[3]

(2)

Commonly it is said that Brahma creates the universe,
Yet the learned in Veda and Purāṇa
Speak of His birth from the navel-lotus of Murāri.
Although it is said He creates, yet
He is Himself dependent therein.
Even Murāri, in the blossom of whose navel-lotus
Brahma was born—
Deeply sleeps upon His serpent-bed
at the time of dissolution,
Therefore, Ananta, with his thousand
hoods, His support,
How can He who is Himself supported
Be called a leader in the creation of the world?

(3)

Even the water of ocean which is a liquid substance,
Cannot exist without a container, therefore,
I take refuge with Her, the Mother of all beings,
Who exists in all things in the form of power.[1]

(4)

Brahma in the lotus
Seeing the eyes of Viṣṇu were
closed in deep slumber
Prayed to the Devī with whom I take shelter."
—A. Avelon's Translation.

We shall now speak about the Tantric conception of the Mahāśakti, but before that allow us to quote Śaṅkarācārya's the great Tripura Sundarī Stotra just for one thing. The hymn will ho w that the conception of Mahāśakti is so abstrusely philosophical that mere literary exegesis will fail to comprehend its deep metaphysical significance. Hence, it is not at all surprising that many things have been misinterpreted by superficial interpretation of mystic expressions of the Tantras. Now, to turn to the Stotra by the great philosopher, Śaṅkarācārya :—

(1)

"I seek refuge with Tripura Sundarī
Who wanders in the Kadamba forest,
The Spouse of the Three-eyed one,
Bank of cloud (in the sky of the heart) of
a number of sages ;
Whose hips defeat the mountains by their greatness,
Who is served by celestial women,
Whose eyes are like new-blown lotus
And who is dark as the colour of a
freshly formed rain-cloud.

(2)

I seek refuge with Tripura Sundarī,
The Spouse of Three-eyed one,
Who dwells in the Kadamba forest,
And who is ever wandering.
The large-eyed one who holds a golden Vīṇā,
Wearing a necklace of priceless gem,
Whose face is glowing with wine,
And who of Her mercy grants prosperity
to Her devotees.

(3)

Ever are we protected by Her whose
abode is the Kadamba forest,
The weight of whose breasts are
garlanded with glittering gems,

Whose breasts are rising,
And excel the mountain in greatness,
Whose cheeks are flushed with wine,
Ever singing sweet songs, the playful One,
dark as a cloud,

Even compassionate to all.

(4)

I seek refuge with Tripura Sundarī,
The Spouse of the Three-eyed one,
Who stays in the Kadamba forest.
Who is seated in the golden circle,
Dwells in the six lotuses.
Even revealing like lightning the
great power (of devotees)

Whose beauty is like that of java flower
And whose brow is adorned with the full moon.

(5)

I take refuge with Her, the sweet speaker,
Daughter of the sage Mataṅga
Whose breast is adorned with Vīṇā,
And whose head is beauteous with
locks of curling hair.

Who dwells in the lotus,
The destroyer of the wicked,
Whose eyes are reddened with wine
The charmer of the enemy of the god of love.

(6)

I take refuge with Tripura Sundarī,
The Spouse of the Three-eyed one,
Who should be meditated upon

As in the first flush of her mobile youth.
Her blue garment stained with drops of blood,
Holding the wine cup;
Her eyes rolling with wine,
With heavy, high and close-set breasts,

Dark of colour and with dishevelled hair.
At time of recitation, I remember the Mother
Lustrous as the scarlet hibiscus,
Her body pasted with saffron and sandal,
Her hair kissed by musk.
The Mother with smiling eyes,
With red garlands, ornaments and raiment,
Who hold the arrow, bow, noose and goad,
The charmer of countless men

(8)

I worship the world-Mother
Who is served by celestial women,
The spouse of Indra,
Skilful in plaiting,
The devoted spouse of Brahma,
Anointed with sandal-paste.
The spouse of Viṣṇu
Adorned with pleasing ornaments."

—**A. Avelon's Translation**

We now respectfully draw the attention of the readers to certain mystic phrases of deep metaphysical significance in the above-quoted hymn, and from this hymn alone it will be amply clear how difficult it is to follow the mystic and figurative expressions of the Tantras by which Mahāśakti has been described and Her glory proclaimed, and hymns and prayers have been composed. We have marked only twenty-three expressions from the above hymn, though they require more elaborate exposition. The readers will be pleased to read again the hymn after consulting the following notes. Of course, we do not pretend to possess that amount of knowledge by which we can make everything clear to our readers, nor do we presume that all our readers want to be enlightened on these things ; rather, we confidently believe that to the majority of the readers our notes and interpretations will be superfluous and tedious, like twice-told tales, because these are sufficiently known to them. However, as some might require notes on these things, we have ventured to put them below :—

(1) Tripura—The body of Śiva became triple in the form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. The Devī is then (the spouse) the Śakti of the Parama Śiva, *i.e.*, Divine energy of Brahmā.

(2) Kadamba forest, *i e*, the universe which the Devas permeate. Śrī Kṛṣṇa too has been represented to stand under a Kadamba tree and playing upon his divine flute, calling all to his fold of love.

(3) Three-eyed—We are two-eyed ; the central eye is the eye of wisdom which Śiva possesses.

(4) Sages—like a rain-cloud, She quenches the spiritual thirst of the sages and devotees.

(5) Greatness, obviously refers to the cosmic image of Śakti, like that of the Viśvarūpa in the Gītā and of the Puruṣa Sūkta in in the Ṛgveda, and this has been referred to in verses 8, 9 and 15. Priceless gems refer to stars and other heavenly bodies of the sky. Breasts in verse 10 refer to that in her Viśvarūpa ; full moon also to that of Viśvarūpa, her brow is the sky.

(6) Ever-wandering—Dynamic forces of the universe, the Divine energy that is ever working in the universe. There is indeed nothing stationary in nature, but everything is in motion ; even the door nail is ever in motion. The word 'rest' is a misnomer (vide the Restless Universe).

(7) Vīṇā—lyre which stands for harmony. Harmony is the expression of the cosmos, the order of the universe. Out of harmony rose the world and in harmony does it exist. (Pythagoras).

(8) Wine—ambrosia.

(9) Glowing with wine—the spirit of gladness that pervades the creation. She is the fountain-head of gladness and joy.

(10) Sweet songs—reeling in her own joy or self-contentment.

(11) Playful one—her play in her creation.

(12) Circle—nebula of light.

(13) Six lotuses—six Cakras of the human body, *viz.*,

(1) Mūlādhāra, (2) Svādhiṣṭhāna, (3) Maṇipūra,
(4) Anāhata, (5) Viśuddha, and (6) Ājñā cakras.

(14) Great power—awakening the great potentialities of yogic powers in her devotee.

(15) Daughter of Mataṅga—another name of Kālī is Mātaṅginī.

(16) Hair—the clouds.

(17) Destroyer of the wicked—so Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of himself in the Gītā ; *Vināśahetu duṣkṛtām.*

(18) Enemy of the god of love—Śiva, who reduced Kāma into ashes by the fire of his anger.

(19) Blue garment—obviously the vast space designated by the blue sky.

(20) Drops of blood—At the florescent period of youth, garment stained with drops of blood shows that the woman is ready to bear. Here signs are seen which herald her creation.

(21) Paragraph 7 is the Dhyāna Mūrti of Śakti, *i.e.*, the image which the devotee has formed about Śakti in his mind for meditation.

(22) Charmer of countless men—she deludes the people with Māyā.

(23) Spouse of. Indra—Śakti or energy of Indra
„ „ Brahmā— „ „ Brahmā
„ „ Viṣṇu— „ „ Viṣṇu

She is the Śakti of every God ; in other words, she manifests herself as Śakti, power, force or energy in every thing and in every being. The universe is the manifestation of Śakti.

In the famous Ānanda Laharī Stava of Śaṅkarācārya, the great philosopher thus speaks of the great glory of Mahāśakti :—

"O Devī ! How can we speak of Thy qualities
Which are not to be described by any Nigama ?
As the sweetness of ghee, milk, the grapes and honey
Cannot be distinguished and described by words,
But may be perceived by the tongue only.
In like manner, Thy beauty can be seen only
by the eye of Parameśvara."

* * *

"Thou art the Mother of the Vedas,
The Regulator of all Tantras,

And the root of all wealth,
Thou whose lotus-feet are worshipped even by
the Wealth-giver.

O Mother ! Thou art the Primal cause of all desires,
Victrix of Kandarpa,[1] Thou art the seed of
liberation of the good.

Thou art the spouse of Para Brahma."[2]

Again, the *Ādyā Kālī stotra* of the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* begins thus :—

Hrīṁ Kālī Śrīṁ Karālī Krīṁ Kalyāṇī Kalāvatī
Kamalā Kalidarpaghnī Kapardi kṛpānvitā.
Hrīṁ Kāli—O Destroyer of time. (1)
Srīṁ Karāli—O Terrific one. (2)
Krīṁ Kalyāṇī—Thou who art beneficent. (3)
Kalāvatī—Professor of all the arts. (4)
Kamalā—Thou art Kamalā. (5)
Kali-Darpaghni—Subduer of pride of Kalī.
Kapardinī kṛpānvitā—Kind towards Mahādeva.

Simple notes on the above follow :—

(1) Time and space are annihilated in Brahma,

(2) The terror of terror. We shall speak of it later on when we deal with the image of the Goddess Kālī.

(3) Merciful and the giver of all blessings.

(4) Goddess of learning, Sarasvatī, the presiding deity of knowledge and arts.

(5) Kamalā, the goddess of prosperity, beauty and wealth and of every thing auspicious.

We shall now draw the attention of the readers to the image of the Goddess Kālī (Śakti) as has been described in the Tantras, and then shall explain the different features of the image.

The Goddess Kālī is of pitch-dark complexion, like the blackest night. Her dishevelled hair streams about her like banks of rain-clouds. She wears a necklace of skulls around her neck, and a girdle of severed palms round her loins In the upper one of the two left arms, she holds an upraised sword, and from the lower arm dangles the severed head of a demon (Dānava). She is surrounded by dreadful, ghostly phantoms on all sides. Blood trickles down from the two corners of her mouth. Of the two right hands, by raising the upper arm she assures protection to all creatures against all distress aud fear, and she pours forth her blessings on all by the lower one of the right hands. Mahākāla (Mahādeva) lies prostrate under her feet. Her face beams forth with divine beauty. Her expression indicates her bashfulness—she bites her own tongue, as if overwhelmed with a deep sense of sham ! Bright streaming from the eye of her forehead dispels off darkness around her. Effulgence of her divine beauty illumines the vast abyss of space.

Such is the image of Goddess Kālī or Śakti. The image is but the figurative expression of a highly philosophical concept of Brahma, representing all the great divine attributes that we can think of possessed by Brahmā or God. The Hindu Trinity—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara—stands for the concept, as every one knows, (1) of Brahma as the creator ; (2) Brahma as the preserver : (3) and Brahma as the destroyer of the universe. Here the three aspects of the three great attributes of Brahma have been separately thought of but Brahma, the creator ; Brahma, the preserver ; and Brahma, the destroyer are one and the same—the Indivisible, Infinite and Eternal God. Goddess Śakti stands for the image of the fullest concept of Brahma representing all the above three aspects or attributes of Brahma together. Śakti is the creator, the preserver and, at the same time, the destroyer of the universe.

We shall now venture to offer the simplest possible explanations of the image, avoding all metaphysical intricacies as far as practicable.

(1) The complexion of the Goddess Kālī is pitch-dark, like a newmoon-night of the blackest hue. Why is it so ? The reason is obvious. What is the concrete object that naturally suggests an idea of the Infinite to us ? Evidently, the vast, illimitable and unbounded sky. And the sky is normally dark. Hence, the colour of the Goddess Śakti is dark like that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who also stands for the conception of Brahma, as the Eternal Lord of love, and of the Spirit of love that permeates the universe, the love that appears in the physical world as the force of attraction that preserves the universe, of things from disruption, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the incarna-

tion of Viṣṇu, and the literal meaning of Viṣṇu is the pervader of the universe, *i.e.*, He who exists by pervading the universe. Viṣṇu is the preserver of the universe. He represents the divine love of Brahmā for the creation that sustains it. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's complexion is dark, because he is infinite God.

(2) The dishevelled hair of Śakti that streams around her face evidently signifies the vast banks of clouds that we ever find floating in the sky and these stand for, as we have already observed, the matted locks of Mahādeva or Śiva.

(3) She wears a necklace of skulls, a girdle of severed palms; she holds an upraised sword for destruction in the upper hand of her two left arms, and in the lower one she holds the severed head of a demon. She is surrounded by ghostly phantoms of hideous sights. Blood trickles down the two corners of her mouth. These are indicative of the terrible aspect of universal death, destruction and dissolution that are ceaselessly and silently going on, *i.e.*, occurring every moment around us. It is a part of the Brahmā's Viśvarūpa. It inspires us with paralysing fear. This is exactly what has been described by Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gītā, when Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa revealed to him the Viśvarūpa.

—Vide Gītā, Chap. XI, Verses 24 to 30.

This is what has been stated by the expression, "Śrīṁ, O Terrific one" in the Ādyā Kālī *stotra* of the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra.

We have already said that the Hindus from the earliest time became keenly conscious about the ultimate end of all things and beings. This reflection about the ultimate end has turned them a philosophical people. It was not that the Hindus were afraid of death but they knew that death will, one day, come to all, and they kept themselves ready for that inevitable end. This is what Manu has said :—

"Do not hunger for life, nor hanker after death, keep yourself ready to respond to the Master's call whenever it comes." This esignation and calm philosophical attitude of the Hindus tow ards death is what Shakespeare has said, "Readiness is all."

It is hard to restrain the temptation of quoting a few lines from a highly thoughtful and a theistic writer—"The knowledge of the real facts about death at once destroys terror and anxiety. The man who is instructed upon points, recognises death as but an incident in life and realises that the existence upon the other side is no more to be dreaded than that upon this side."—The Other Side of Death.—The Rt. Rev. C.W. Lead Beater.

That our fear of death springs mostly from our ignorance and from the instinctive terror of utter annihilation cannot be gainsaid,[1] whereas knowledge dispels that fear.

(4) By raising the upper hand of the two right arms she assures all creatures' protection against all fear and danger. There are terrific forces in Nature; puny beings tremble before them; they are too weak, too helpless; they may be utterly annihilated at any moment by any one of those terrible destructive forces of nature, but there is mercy of God. That infinite kindness and mercy protect the universe and fill every heart with kind assurance and hope that there is, after all, great shelter against all these in the divine love that sustains and supports the universe, like a mother's love. Again, with the lower hand of the two right arms, she bestows her blessings on all. Here, there is no discrimination. All the children alike, independent of their merits or demerits, share in mother's divine love for her offsprings. Mother is generous, kind and loving to all her children; there is no limit to mother's blessings or bounty, Likewise, there is no limit to divine grace and love. They are unbounded, they embrace all, nothing can exist even for a moment outside this magnetic zone of divine love that attracts every thing and every being to the loving bosom of God. This is what has been expressed in the Ādyā Kālī *Stotra* of the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra by Krīṁ—Thou who art beneficent.

(5) Mahākāla rolls under the feet of the Goddess Kālī. Mahākāla is another name for Śiva, or the great Lord of destruction and death. But the Sanskrit word Kāla also denotes time. Mahākāla here evidently denotes the image of eternal Time. Now, Time has no existence without God. Time and space are annihilated in Brahma and this is what has been expressed in the Ādyā Kālī *stotra* of the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, as "Hrīṁ—O Destroyer of Time."

(6) It seems that the great Goddess is ashamed of her own conduct and there is an expression of bashfulness on her divinely beautiful face. It naturally denotes an incident that is connected with the mythical legend associated with the image of Kālī. Mahākāla or Śiva in Hindu mythology is the divine consort of Goddess Kālī. So the Goddess becomes naturally smitten with a deep sense of shame by witnessing her own husband rolling under her feet, which Śiva did in order to dissuade the Goddess from her further act of destruction. Śakti is Destroyer in both her capacities

as the universal Destroyer of everything and as the destroyer of all wicked souls that stand in the path of universal welfare. These wicked souls are the Demons and Dānavas of the Hindu mythology. About these evil elements that inferfere with the well-being and peace of the world, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, in the Gītā, that for the destruction of wicked ones and for establishing the rule of righteousness, He will take his birth again and again on the earth.

The idea of universal destruction is also closely associated with the notion of the destruction of all moral evils that stand in the path of universal peace and progress. The great Goddess Kālī, in one aspect, is the Destroyer of the universe and, in another aspect, the Destroyer of all evil and wicked elements that disturb the well-being of the world. Now we have ventured to put a very humble interpretation to the incident of Mahākāla rolling under the feet of the Goddess Kālī. This representation, we think, not only denotes that Time is annihilated in Brahma, but also figuratively implies that divine mercy ever counteracts and interferes with His latent potentiality for universal destruction. Śiva or God Bholānāth is all-forgiving and all-forgetting. Divine mercy is ever ready even to bless the wicked : it is by their own perverseness that they invite their own destruction and death. Divine mercy is helpless to save them, for they will rush headlong to ruin.

Again, we have ventured to interpret the expression of bushfulness in our own humble way. We are very often blind to this divine love that surrounds us like the mother's love and often saves us from destruction and ruin. It remains concealed from our distorted vision, which is all-engrossed with the sights of material objects. In our overjealousness for material welfare and in our over-anxiety for all material obstacles that may stand in the way of achieving our ends and in fulfilling our desire, we overlook the saving grace of God. This is, we venture to think, one of the reasons, that the expression of the Goddess is indicative of bashfulness; our spiritual blindness turns us indifferent to this saving grace of God, so it fights shy to reveal itself to us. Again, the revelation of the Spirit in us like the revelation of an exetremely shy maid, very reluctant to reveal her beauty to the profane gaze of the world. god's creation loudly proclaims its existence, but God remains hidden behind his creation. So Goddess Kālī is shy to reveal Herself to us. We must, by our efforts and Sādhanā, make Herself reveal to us.

God is ever unknown to us, but the Hindu Śāstras declare, though unknown, He is not unknowable. By our Sādhanā, moral and spiritual discipline, by Jñāna (knowledge) we can know or realise God. This rare incident is like the revelation of an extremely shy thing to us. This is, we think, one of the meanings that we may find in the expression of shyness of the Goddess Kālī. Brahmā, as if, is always shy to reveal Himself to us.

(7) The central eye, or the eye on the forhead, indicates the eye of wisdom or knowledge. It is Jñāna or knowledge that dispels all ignorance and doubt about God, like physical light destroys all physical darkness and illumines every object with its brightness.

(8) The effulgence of her divine beauty illumines the universe. The beauty of the universe, the beauty of every thing is the expression of divine beauty. It is divine beauty and every being that we love and admire in an object, which in itself has no intrinsic beauty of its own. The beauty of the universe and of every object in it is the reflection of divine beauty.

This is what is figuratively expressed by the image of the Goddess Kālī in the Tantras. Of course, we have, as briefly as possible described the broad outlines of the great image, without attempting in the least to go deep into the abstruse philosophical significance connected with it.

"There was darkness in the beginning, let there be light and there was light," so says the Book of Genesis in the Bible. We need not be harsh as Thomas Huxley in his 'Illogical Geology", where he tears the Biblical account of creation into fragments by his cold logic. The theory of creation as given in the Upaniṣads can stand the scrutiny of strictest logic and science, and the Goddess Śakti, in one aspect, is the image of the beginning and end of the beginning, end of the universe. The origin of the universe, as well as of every thing, is dark, and its end is also shrouded in darkness. The great Goddess of darkness or Kālī alone can dispel this and can illumine the devotee's heart. Once you are blessed with divine grace, all darkness melts away, and you become immersed in the ocean of light; you are carried away on the crest of the waves of light that surge all round you, and you lose yourself in the rapturous emotion of joy that defies all attempts of description and your spiritual darkness is removed by divine light, the light that was never on the land or on the sea. That was what Ramkrishna Paramahaṁsa realised when the great mother revealed herself from the stony sheath of the image, which Paramahaṁsa worshipped with rapturous devotion and love. The divine transport and the rapturous emotion that the flashing image of the great Goddess awakens in the devotee's heart, struggling in the darkness of doubt and despair, defy all attempts of description. The great Śaṅkarāçārya, in his *Ānanda Laharī* Stava, says that sweetness of grape cannot be distinguished and described by words, but may be perceived by the tongue only. So it can only be realised by the fortunate devotee, who has been blessed with the Divine grace, Yet, it seems to us, that complex emotion that it arouses in the devotee's heart is something akin to the emotion roused by wild swans' notes in the setting darkness of the evening, as described by the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore, in his Balākā, and we make no apology in quoting its translation by professor Rai Lalit Mohan Chatterji.

"The earth beneath me reels
The very woods and hills
Are in fight, passing on and on
From isle to isle from th' unknown to
the More Unknown !"

As soon as the revelation occurs to the devotee, all hitherto-existing environment melts away in the Ocean of light and his soul takes its flight from the gross earth to Brahma or God in whom it becomes finally immersed. It loses its individual existence and becomes one with Universal Soul.

The closing stanza is as follows :—

"In my heart I seem'd to hear
With mpriad birds in flight
By day and night,
From its nest another Bird had flown
On some quest from shore to shore unknown !
From countless wings this music thrill'd the sphere—
Not there, not here, elsewhere, some other where! "

In ecstatic transport, the devotee's soul soars from the dusty Earth and loses inself in the Eternal Infinite—the Ever-grea Unknown.

CHAPTER IX

MYSTICISM IN TANTRAS

Mysticism should not be confused with occult or mysterious phenomenon, as it is sometimes done. In a broad sense it denotes a particular attitude of mind towards certain things of spiritual experience. It is hard to give a precise definition of the term, but from the cumulative experience of the mystics of mind the East and the West, of which we have record, it appears that the central fact of a mystic's experience is an overwhelming consciousness of God and his own soul. One of the characteristics that distinguish him from others is his burning love for God and a sence of solace and joy in contemplation. The mystic has got direct, immediate, first-hand, intuitive apprehehension of God. He speaks with God as a person and not as a matter of belief. He is possessed of a gift of the faculty of intuition. Exercise of the intellect, feeling and will can make a philosopher of a man but not a mystic. Super-sensuous experience is also very common to a mystic irrespective of time or clime. He feels himself in His living presence, is charmed by His beauty, talks with Him, touches Him and even gets a smell of profound sweetness surpassing odour of the balsams and the aromatic herbs and flowers of the world. Some mystics have Godvision and see with very eyes the Gods and Goddesses possessing various attractive colours and glorious attributes. Some hear the sound of cymbals, bell, singing of the birds, the musical note of the flute, humming of bees, blare of conchs, *anāhata nāda* which is the music of the spheres etc.

Let us see how mysticism differs from philosophy. While philosophy seeks to enquire into the reality of objects, to examine and analyse them to comprehend the thing-in-itself, mysticism goes much beyond. Philosophy constructs facts or our experience and attempts to arrive at reality, and the synthetic vision of thought endows reality with certain characteristics. But thought or philosophical reflection cannot fully exhibit the living character of reality, for reality in the light of philosophy is an object of intellectual comprehension which is more to be understood than to be realised or felt. Therefore, sheer philosophical view of things lacks all emotional elements. So pure philosophy in the light of religion is more cold intellectual abstraction than an object of .deep emotion. But it is the emotional content that is all-important in religion, and the emotional element may be said to be the vital breath of religion that keeps it alive. Herein mysticism comes in and scores a triumphant victory over cold philosophy while the philosopher limits himself to its normal functioning and intuitions, the mystic wants to grasp its growing ranges and its subtler expansions. Failing to make up the gap between self and not-self, the former are inclined to view the sections of conscious life, leaving its wide range untouched. The mystic, however having the acumen to withdraw his consciousness from natural limitations can pass beyond mental constriction into the elastic life of the spirit. Mystics pay their attention towards the appreciation of the subtle turns in conscions life and the continuity of life and its expression in finer light of gradation through the subconscious, conscious and the super-conscious depths. The method that is followed is that of instropection carried into the finer and higher reaches. The mystic is the self-experimenter. He is not fond of study and book-knowledge and lets the consciousness have its free course. His chief aim is to taste the joy of this freedom of conscious life by the removal of its limitations and ignorance. How mystcism acquaints us with the cosmic ways and ends and releases us from the short way of life, is explained by Prof. M. Sarkar thus : "Though personality has been the chief basis or hold of mystical consciousness, the ideal has been the access of conscious life unfettered and cosmic in its movement. The cosmic depth of existence with the free play of life has been the rock upon which mysticism fastens its anchor, the aspiration being the intimate acquaintance with the movement of life in infinite layers of existence It is naturally this sympathy with the symphonies of life enjoyed in their vastness that makes mystical life a blessing and an attraction. Mystical life exhibits the unity of existence in a superior way; the details of existence are shown in the cosmic setting and it is this knowledge and its ways that human mind in its profound aspiration must discover as the demand of our being. The real value of non-attachment lies in affording a release from the insurgent ways of life and in intimating us with the divine ways. Nonattachment releases us from the dubious ways and opens out vista of wider stretches of life.

It affords release from the mentalised ways of expression in art, history, philosophy and discovers new pathways of expression born of extreme detachment. Mysticism in all its forms does not silence life and its creative expression; in some form it emerges out with diviner synthetic note which pervades life. The mystical experiences are not cut off from our personal life. The personal here exhibits itself as the cosmical; at least, the dimension of our being and feelings show their cosmical nature, for they are elevated to a supramental plane where the character of our experience changes. The limitations of our experience are withdrawn and our consciousness is released from its historicity and environmental setting. The opening of our consciousness on the higher levels does not mystify our experience, but shows its wideness and infinite modulations. It is indeed the privilege of dynamic mysticism to the vertical and horizontal expressions of spirit and to accept and to deny the details of existence and to read them with cosmic meaning and significance. The conflict and discord are dissolved as soon as the access into the fountain-spring is attained. This is not a mentalised understanding but a direct seeing into the heart of things.

"Dynamic mysticism here in India has taken its chief expression in Vaiṣṇavism and Tantrism. Both of theme have a philosophic approach to Truth and in spite of the difference in the cast of thought, their unanimity lies in the emphasis put upon the dynamic aspect of existence and upon psychic harmony of being as yielding final insight and access. A poise of being with complete detachment from the usual ways may be a necessity. It does not follow a philosophic understanding or contemplation but the psychic tremor of being. Dynamic mysticism relies more upon it than upon anyting, for it reveals the mysteries of divine life which it is not possible for intellect to see or understand. The intellectual background is necessary to equip the understanding but the psychic insight is required to enter into the mysteries of the spirit and to enjoy them. A psychic unfolding maygive us more than what even we can imagine but without this dynamic mysticism full particulars and possibilities can hardly be followed and appreciated."

"Mysticism," writes Alexis Carrel, a Noble Laureate, in his highest sense comprises a very elaborate technique, a strict discipline. It requires an elevation of mind towards God—who is the source of all things, towards a power, a centre of forces. First, the practice of asceticism. It is impossible to enter the realm of mysticism without ascetic preparation, as, it is to become an athlete without submitting to physical training. Initiation to asceticism is hard. Who wants to undertake this rough and difficult journey must renounce all the things of the world, family and himself. Then he may have to dwell for a long time in the shadow of spiritual night. While asking for this grace of God and deploring his degradation and undeservedness, he undergoes the purification of his senses. He progressively weans himself from himself. His prayer becomes contemplation. He enters into illuminative life. He is not capable of describing his experiences. When he attempts to express what he feels, he sometimes borrows, as did St. John of the Cross, the language of the carnal love. His mind escapes from space and time. He apprehends an effable Being. He is in God and acts with him."

Mysticism involves an intercourse with the spiritual world, an awareness of it, which transcends the normal experience and is independent of the general religious conciousness of the community to which he belongs. There is a certain amount of universality in his mystical experience. All mystics teach the glories of God and of ecstacy in meditating upon Him or singing His name. There may be temperamental differences in them but there is no difference in the equality of their realisation. Śrī Caitanya spent his days and nights in reciting and singing the name of God. So great was his passion for Kṛṣṇa that it consumed all his earthly passions. He felt not only an undercurrent of joy in his heart but the intoxication overflowed his heart to all his senses. He was beside himself. He sang, danced, laughed and wept, His repturous songs sung in accompaniment with the music of *khols* (special musical instrument) sent a thrill of joy to his hearers. His emotion was so intense that he sang and danced like a mad man and often fell unconscious. A slightest refrence to Lord Kṛṣṇa whom he adored, in course of conversation with his companions, would stir the spiritual cord of life and make him instantly absorbed in *bhava*. His eyes turned inward, and he lost all knowledge about the exterior world. When he was absorbed in *bhāva* (a particular feeling), he could sing the name of God; when he was half-unconscious, a stage prior to *samādhi*, he could only dance; and when fully abstracted and merged with his self, he was in a state of *samādhi*. Regarding his early religious life he himself has said that he got the instruction to recite the name of Kṛṣṇa from his preceptor. Recitation of His name made him mad with joy. He could not restrain himself. This instilled first a spirit of devotion, which deepened in a short time to *bhāva* (emotional feelings) and the latter developed into *mahābhāva*—an insatiable desire of union with the Deity of his adoration, and finally *mahābhāva* turned into *prema*—love for God which is free and spontaneous. This *prema* is far superior to the four desirables for *sādhakas, viz*, dharma (religion), artha (understanding of the Sāstras), kāma (fulfilment of desires) and mokṣa [liberation). Liberation was considered by Śrī Caitanya as absolutely insignificant in comparison with the intensity of joy to be felt while a devotee was in direct communion with God. He says that the spiritual longing that remains indistinct and undefined in every human heart needs be cultivated for its own sake, without any kind of ulterior motive whether of liberation or of happiness. Śrī Caitanya acknowledges the value of calm meditation (*śānta bhāva*), of the submission of one's self to the service of God (*dāsya bhāva*), of considering God as one's intimate friend ((*sakhya bhāva*) and the highest love in his opinion is to accept God as one's most beloved lover without whom the very existence of life becomes meaningless.

The great sages of India from the earliest time were all mystics and there are many such even now, whose ardent devotional fervour has lifted them to the highest spiritual plane. It is, however, a highly striking thing that most of the famous mystics of India within the last thousand years were Tantric saints. The reason for this seems to us to be the unique feature of Tantric Sādhanā, which, as we have already remarked, utilises and employs all mental and physical potentialities of the devotee for the attainment of spiritual bliss. The Tantric form of worship is generally more absorbing than any other form, as it tries to turn even all instincts and appetites of man for the cultivation of religion and for such moral and spiritual culture that may stand the test of all worldly temptations. Thus, Tantrism is apt to create a mystic temperament in its devotee. The greatest mystic since the birth of Śrī Caitanya of whom we possess any authentic historical account was a Śākta devotee of Bengal, whom Rāmakṛṣṇa designated as an Emancipated Being from the very birth. The name of this great devotee is Ramprasad Sen who, it is said, ever lived in the living presence of his Deity, the Divine Mother of the universe. That he always lived in a deep spiritual transport is evidenced by his immortal songs which are unique in world's literature for their devotional fervour. They are also unparalleled for their poetical wealth, happy imagery, flights of imagination, depths of thought and philosophical import. Their spontaneous flow, graceful ease, unaffected simplicity, unravishing sweetness and deep emotional fervour have rendered them quite unique in world's literature. No sooner than a song of his is sung, it sets the inmost chords of one's heart, vibrating with the deep devotional ardour of a living faith which, for the time being, is generated by the song even in the most sceptic soul. Such is the wonderful power of Ramaprasad's devotional songs, that one need not at all be a Śākta to enjoy them. They express the noblest religious sentiments of man in general.

Ramaprasad Sen was born about 200 years ago and was a court-poet of Mahārājā Kṛṣṇa Candra of Krishnagar (Nadia), one of the chief councillors of Sirajuddaula, the last independent Nabāb of Bengal. Ramaprasad Sen was a Vaidya by caste, one of the three highest castes of Bengal. But he made no distinction between man and man simply on the ground of birth.

It was Ramaprasad Sen who first expressed in Bengali the true spirit of the Tantras, explained their profound philosophy, and gave correct interpretations of many Tantric rites and mystic rituals, and strongly protested against their profane and wrong interpretations by the ignorant and immoral people. His songs are a living protest against popular superstition and prejudice. Ramaprasad made no distinction between Śāktism and Vaiṣṇavism. To him, Kṛṣṇa and Kālī were one and the same, exhibiting only the two phases of the Divine Lila. In one of his great songs, he sings :

"Once Yaśodā used to hug Thee on her lap, calling Thee Nīlamaṇi. Where hast Thou concealed that personation of Thine?"

Nay more, even Rādhā was but a part of the Great Mother. The Divine Mother divided herself into two halves, sings the poet Ramaprasad, one half was Kṛṣṇa and the other half was Rādhā. Half of thyself is accomplished Rādhā, half male and half female," just like Ardhanārīśvara or Hara-Gaurī. In fact, Rāmaprasad made no distinction between Kṛṣṇa, Kālī, and Rādhā; all the three were the manifestations of the Mother for Līlā. Nay more, Rāmprasad, as a great Vedantist, sings :

"Everything, Mother, is thy image."

Thus the great devotee, Ramaprasad expresses the true spirit of the Tantric creed and Tantric worship. In one of his immortal songs Ramaprasad sings.

Why does thou worry thyself for nothing ?
Just sit in contemplation, saying glory be unto Kālī.
Pride is caused by worship with pompous rites,
Thou shall worship the Mother secretly, and
the world will not know of it.
What need hast thou for any earthen, metallic or
stone image ?
Place the mental image on the pedestal of thy heart.
What is the need of the offerings of rice and ripe
plantains?
Offer thou the nectar of devotion and thy mood will
be gratified.
Why shouldst thou sacrifice a man, buffalo or kid ?
Sacrifice the passions, uttering glory be unto Kālī.
What need hast thou of Bel-leaves
or of the Ganges-water ?
There is lotus of thousand petals in the body, offer that to the
Mother's feet,
What use hast thou of a lamp or a chandelier ?
Let the light of knowledge burn day and night.
Ramaprasad says, what need hast thou of
musical instruments ?
Clap thy hands in joy, resting thy mind
on the Mother's feet.

He was, indeed, one of the greatest cosmopolitans of men. Nay more, to him even the humblest creature was the child of his Divine Mother. In one of his great songs, Rāmaprasad protests against the animal sacrifice before the Goddess Kālī, saying :

"Every creature is the child of the Mother;
The Mother never disowns any;
And in order to please that Mother
Thou killest a kid !"

Such was the spiritual and moral alchemy of ardent mysticism of Ramaprasad Sen, that could invest even the common articles of worship with a profound spiritual significance. Such a mysticism comes only from a very close communion with God that enables the devotee to live ever in the transport of spiritual bliss and in the beatitude of spirit. Ramaprasad was a *Vīra Sādhaka* who considered himself to be always under the protection of God and with his firm faith he was able to get over the worst type of fear. He went to the extent of meditating on dead bodies in solitary crematoriums at the dead of night when everything around was enveloped in deep darkness inspiring fearful thrills into the hearts of those who by chance had been placed in it. Like Buddha hunted by Māra, Ramaprasad was first disturbed by fearful sights and sounds but ultimately he was able to overcome them by his strong will and concentration of mind and have a vision of the Mother of his adoration. His experiences on this kind of *Sādhanā* have been recorded in some of his immortal songs. He narrates how in the dead of night in a dark fortnight he was engaged in *Śavāsana*, *i.e.*, took his seat on the dead body of a *caṇḍāla* (an unclean person). He was uttering the name of Kāli and sometimes he sang *byom byom* with a particular movement of the cheek. He attempted to dive deep into meditation in that posture forsaking all fears. Suddenly there arose terrible sounds from all quarters and the entire atmosphere seemed to be heavy with the presence of supernatural beings such as *bhūtas*, *bhairavas* and *vetālas*. With crescents overhead and tridents in hand and wearing matted hairs dangling up to their feet and rolling coppery eyes instilling fear to the seers, they appeared as terrible and frightening as the emissaries of death. They now appeared in the form of a snake, then in the form of a gigantic bear. They occasionally burst forth into thunderous laughter to dissuade him from his purpose. Ramaprasad closely clasped the feet of the Mother and tried to engage himself into meditation disregarding these sights. Ultimately he triumphed over these supernatural elements who being baffled in their purpose melted away. Ramaprasad says in his song, "how can danger come to a person who is devoted to the Mother and always utters Her name. The mercy of the Mother is bound to descend on such a *sādhaka* who can conquer over the distracting factors standing in the way of communion with God. Threatenings cannot deter him from maintaining his seat on the dead body. The Mother ultimately comes to him with cries of 'No fear, No fear. See, I am come, my son.' The *sādhaka* is then immersed in an ocean of joy unexperienced before. The fact is this that in such surroundings, *sādhanā* is a matter of life and death. The *sādhaka* understands more than any body else that if for a single moment his attention to the Mother fails, he will be in the grim grip of Death. All considerations of the world then cease, the only objective being to be absorbed in meditation in the midst of these foreboding circumstances, and hence attainment of *siddhi* in one night is possible. A modern *Sādhaka* has not to take his seat on a dead body. He can consider his own self as sitting on his own body which may be deemed as dead. He has to suppress all desires and consider himself as an unembodied being. If the sense of physical body returns, the purpose of this *āsana* is gone. By practising in this way even in one's home, one can easily attain a high spiritual state.

By his *sādhanā* Ramaprasad attained a stage in which a certitude arose in him that the worldly pleasures and wealth and even ostentatious *pūjās* could not make a man truly happy in this life and hereafter. The Mother was the only boat to cross over the ocean of worldly existence, fathomless in extent. In one of his songs he makes a definite assertion that so long as the *jīvas* are steeped in ignorance, they are to make a clear differentiation between this and that, between the conscious element and the world. But when true knowledge dawns, it appears that both of them are the manifestations of the Mother, who is the very essence of the Parmātman To an uninitiated in this line all these will seem to be Greek, but he who advances progressively with a devoted heart for the supreme spiritual realisation is blessed with the vision of Mother. She is above Māyā (above attachment) and is at the same time the sole cause of the world phenomenon and in Her infinite grace and mercy for the devotees presents Herself in a form as suited to their temperament and inclinations for their felicity.

By his devotion Ramaprasad arrived at a mystic attitude which was unruffled by all fears of death. All doubts that spring in the human heart regarding the riddle of life and death were stilled in him for ever, in the cells of his physical frame. In one of his songs he says :

"The road by which Death comes has been sealed,
All doubts, of my heart have been severed,
Four Śivas are keeping constant watch over me,
Being stationed at the nine doors of my room,
The Śakti that vitalises is confined in the room,
Oh verily there is no cause of fear of death,
The room rests on a prop supported by three strings,
In the Sahasrāra petal is Śrīnātha holding out assurances,
Ramaprasad says this room is lit up by the Sun and the
Moou.
They reside in the very heart by removing gloom."

The room represents the body and the nine doors are the nine orifices of the body. The prop stands for the spinal cord which is the centre of all sensations. The three strings are the three *guṇas, viz., sattva, rajas* and *tamas* which are responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. The sun and the moon imply the two *nāḍis, iḍā* and *piṅgalā* which lie on either side of the *sūṣumnā*, the *nāḍī* for god-realisation. The four Śivās referred to stay at the *Mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭhānaa, viśuddha* and *ajñā cakras*. The Śakti refers to the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti which rises from the *mūlādhāra* up to *sahasrāra*. and then comes back in a rhythmical flow.

The closing years of Ramaprasad passed in frantic communion with the Mother. He always rolled in ecstacy at the sight of the Goddess Kālī swinging this way and that in the lotus of his heart, his mind being engaged in setting the swing to motion. In rapture he sings that one who has the rare fortune of seeing the swing of the Mother, is verily in Her embrace. He bursts out in joy, "Oh, a blue cloud descends in the sky of my heart and my overpowered mind dances like a peacock merrily. Thunders burst out with the sound of 'O, Mother' and Her smile is visible in the flash of lightning. Like torrents from clouds, incessant tears roll down from my eyes and my *prāṇa*, like a *cātaka* bird is relieved from all thirsts of desire." He dived deep in the ocean of the heart which is the receptacle of priceless jewels. Ramaprasad says, 'Dive deep, if you will find the jewels.'

Another mystic is Ramkrishna Paramahamsa of whom we have heard so much. His whole life was dedicated to the worship of God. In devotion he was as great as Śrī Caitanya, losing all sense of the physical body and the external objects even at the hearing of sounds and narrations of the *līlas* of Rāma or of Kṛṣṇa. He was a devoted worshipper of Goddess Kālī who was a Living Presence to him. He would talk with Her, communicate to Her his feelings and take refuge in Her when in fear, like a child holding the apron of his mother. Both the Absolute and the Personal Īśvara were the objects of his adoration. He practised for some time essential teachings of all the religions and has testified to truths underlying in all of them. He has thus taught toleration of all religions. Great devotees and intellectual persons of all communities gathered round him and were inspired by his simple and reverential bearing, talks and emotions. His songs, which were very melodious and thrilling, were the objects of great admiration.. He passed his days and nights like Śrī Caitanya in communion with his Deity, and in highly interesting talks with those who came to him for guidance and advice, in the shape of anecdotes and parables. In the evening, when there was none about him, he would talk with his Deity like a child. He was a practiser of Nitya Līlā Yoga, as he called it. He would remain absorbed for hours in meditation of the Absolute, eternal and unchanging, and would also meditate upon Īśvara with his glorious manifestations. *Brahmajñāna*, in its true sense, he says, is the attainment of the Eternal One. But this stage is hard to attain. Śrī Ramkrishna said that this stage cannot be reached unless one is purged of all worldly considerations. When Bhagavatī was born in the house of Himālaya, she showed herself in various forms to Her father (Devī Bhāgavata, 7/35-36). At this Himālaya expressing a desire to see Brahmā, Bhagavatī said that the only means of this was seeking the company of the holy by abandonment of all ideas of worldly possessions and sexual passions. It is from the Eternal One that this sportive creation commences. Śrī Ramakrishna, however, refers to a stage higher than this, which agrees with the highest teachings of the Tantra. He says that there is a stage where the idea of many as well as of one goes off altogether, for so long as there is one, there are many. Here He is beyond comparison. He is neither light nor darkness, neither positive nor negative, neither existence nor nonexistence. When the Sādhaka comes down from this plane, his mind feasts upon the diverse manifestations of Īśvara. At this stage it is quite clear to the Sādhaka that Īśvara, His Māyā and Jīvas are all perceivable, and that it is He who has become all these out of the twenty-four *tattvas*.

The way to God realisation, in the opinion of Śrī Ramakrishana, is an ardent longing for God. The devotee sings the name of God who is *Rasa* (Nectar) and drinks it like a bee sitting on a lotus. When one revolves in his mind the name of God and His attributes, then one gains devotion. His natural inclinations cease to function as before and his sense-activities and sense-propensities desist from operating. Īśvara, Ramkrishna has declared with emphasis, on more than one occasion, can be seen with these physical eyes. The Vedas have asserted that God is beyond the reach of word and mind, but this assertion, he says, must be taken in this sense that He is unattainable to one whose mind is attached to worldly things. He is Pure Mind and is cognizable by Pure Mind. When one's mind is purified and cleansed by devotion, prayer and attendance on the preceptor, one can see Īśvara. Book-knowledge and knowledge of *śāstras* are of no avail in this quest for the Infinite. Neither is it imperative to visit the sacred places, wear garlands of beads on the neck, nor to observe austerities and religious vows. These are of some value to the beginners in *Sādhanā* as stepping stones, but too much importance should not be imparted to them as the Sādhaka advances. To those who say that to understand Īśvara one has first to study the physical and biological sciences, Śrī Ramkrishna retorts, Why start at the wrong end ? Take Īśvara first and then you will understand that the creation proceeds from Īśvara. First attain Him and if necessary you will come to know all other things, as you like But when you know Him, all desires of knowing other things appear petty, and disappear for good. So long as a big man, expected to come, does not present himself, there are desultory talks about him, but as soon as he is come, all attention is turned towards him and the talks that were previously going on stop automatically, so if your one desire is to see God, then why so much fuss about the world. creation, philosophical discourses on God. In this world one is born with the express object of realising God. Then why do you keep yourselves engaged in worldly affairs and in things other than God ? Yearn after Him, pray to Him with your whole heart. He is sure to hear our prayer. If one is impatient for God-vision and considers his life useless without it, it is clear there is not much delay for him to have the coveted vision. The essential thing in religion is to dive deep. People are afraid to do so, lest they may lose their mental balance and get mad. They should know that the Sat-Cit-Ānanda, the ultimate Reality, is the ocean of nectar. When one gets plunged in it, he is neither sunk nor perishes like a bee meeting death on sitting in a vessel of honey. Thereby he becomes immortal." He further says, "By weeping even one can attain *samādhi*, because at the time of weeping the *Kumbhaka* (a yogic operation) takes place of itself, leading to the state of *samādhi*. Just as a devotee cannot live without God, so God also cannot live without his devotee.

Now we come to the Tantric aspects of the teaching of Śrī Ramkrishna who was initiated into mysteries of the Tantras by Bhairavī-Mā. We shall put down here in a concise form his teachings on the Ādyā Śakti—the source of primal energy. According to him, the world is the manifestation of Mother. Words of logic and reason move within a circle and cannot get beyond it. Only when one has a vision of God, he understands the truth and sees for himself that he has become both the animate and the inanimate world. Once Ramkrishna was worshipping the Mother in the temple of Dakṣiṇeśvara ; on a sudden, a new light dawned upon him. He saw that the Mother has become all these. The image was the Mother, the altar was the Mother, the utensils for the Pūjā were all Mother, even the threshold, the marble slabs were verily the Mother. Everything in the Pūjā-chamber seemed as if steeped in the nectar of Sat-chidānanda. Even the cat loitering about was the Mother and Ramkrishna fed it with the *bhoga* meant for the Goddess. It is only after attaining Him that it becomes crystalclear that Īśvara is all these individual and the inanimate things. He has become the twenty-four *tattvas* that constitute the universe. He is both within and without So long one advances with reason as his only support, the world appears in one facet, but when one progresses with God as his main stay, He shows himself, and the same world appears in a quite different aspect. Ramkrishna also speaks of a higher state of consciousness to which we have already referred. We mean Ānandamaya state of the Tantra. When the Sādhaka advances, his self persists, he sees the God-visions with his self separately existing. If the very self is engrossed, there is neither one nor two. It is the state of infinite beatitude and ecstacy. The legends of Śiva show that he too stayed in these two states. Sometimes he is totally absorbed in *yoga* without even a flicker of self-consciousness within. He is then in *samādhi* and is *Ātmārāma*, enjoying the bliss of Self, knowing the Self as in sleep. But when He awakes from that state, then the idea of a self, separate from the Absolute Self, returns and at once He commerces to dance crying, 'O Rāma. O Rāma.' Ramakrishna, however, like Rāmaprasād, being the son of the Divine Mother, yearned more for the sight of the Mother than for the Absolute Self.

Ramakṛṣṇa says that the Brahma is Rasa itself. It is for enjoying the sweetness that lies within that Brahma divides himself into two. In Vaiṣṇava terminology it is known as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and in the language of the Sāṅkhya as Puruṣa-Prakṛti vikāra. The attributeless thus assumes attributes for the spread of His Viśva Līlā which is within Him. The consciousness—the Cit-Śakti—that thus comes into being which, in Tantric parlanee, is knowu as Mahāmāyā, spreads out and is transformed into twenty-four *tattvas*.

The beings and objects all around are like so many receptacles within every one of which resides the primal Śakti, in the shape of Kulakuṇḍalinī and the six *cakras*. She is called Ādyā Śakti, above all attributes of femininity or masculinity. In this state Mahāmāyā devours Śiva in a trite. Again, when the knowledge of the six *cakras* arises in Her, Śiva emerges out of the thigh of the Mahāmāyā. It is then then that Śiva reveals the Tantras.

Rāmakṛṣṇa further says that whatever is seen around is the manifestation of the cosmic energy of the Ādyā Śakti. The creation, preservation and destruction—the animate and the inanimate being—meditation and the meditator—devotion and the loved—all these are Her glory. There is no difference between Brahma and His Śakti. Just as milk cannot be thought of apart from its whiteness, fire cannot be conceived apart from its burning capacity, so Brahma and His Śakti are inseparable. The Ādyā Śakti or Mahāmāyā encompasses Brahma. When the covering is withdrawn. One comes to know His original *svarūpa*. Then I am you and you are I. As long as the veil of Māyā lasts, it will not be correct to say,—I am He or I am the Paramātman. A ripple belongs to water, does not belong to the ripple. As long as the covering is there, it is well to say—Mother, Thou are the Mother, I am thy son. This conscious energy in the shape of Mahāmāyā covers all in the veil of ignorance. It is said in the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa that when the hermits saw Rāma, they prayed, 'O Rāma, do not overwhelm us by your Māyā that enchants the world.' When Māyā is propitiated and allows passage, *Brahmajñāna* is possible. Rāma, Sīta is in the middle, while Lakṣmaṇa draws up the rear Sītā intervening Lakṣmaṇa cannot see his beloved Rāma. So as long as the veil of Māyā hangs between Īśvara and the Jīva, the Jīva cannot enter the realm of Īśvara and be in His presence.

Regarding the six *cakras* or centres of knowledge Rāmakṛṣṇa says that there is much similarity between them and the seven *lokas*, *viz.*, bhur, bhuva, sva, maha, jana, tapa and satya. The first three *lokas* correspond with the three *cakras*, *viz*, mūlādhara, svādhiṣṭāna and maṇipūra. Mind usually resides in these three planes. When the mind attains the fourth plane, which is anāhata, the Jīvātmā then appears like a flame and the Sādhaka has a vision of illumination. He says in wonder—What is this, what is this ! When the mind rises to the fifth plane, he longs after hearing of the glories of God. This is the *Viśuddha cakra.* When the mind attains the sixth plane which is the *Ājñācakra,* there is a vision of God, but God here is like a light enclosed in a lantern. You cannot touch it. There is glass between. Beyond the sixth cakra is the seventh plane. When mind goes there, it loses its existence, Jīva becoming one with the Paramātman. This is the state of *samādhi.* The knowledge of the body and of the outside world vanishes. All reasonings stop. When a Sādhaka reaches this stage, a certitude comes that he is the instrument and the Lord is the player thereon. The Lord is the doer and all else are non-doers. It is through His will that the leaf moves. The Sādhaka becomes boy-like.

Such were all the great sages of India and such was Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahaṁsa in our time. Ramaprasad and Rāmkṛṣṇa will ever be honoured as the greatest Apostles of the true tenets of the Tantra and of Tantric religion. In the lives of great saints like Ramaprasad and Rāmkṛṣṇa, we should seek for the true interpretation of the Tantric principles as they have been mostly expressed in cryptic language that very often hides their real meaning. It must be noted once for all that the Tantric form of religion tries to lead the devotee to the attainment of the highest moral and spiritual perfection that will triumph over all temptations and worldly attachments and conquer everything that may stand in the way of the attainment of the highest spiritual bliss or emancipation.

Tantric mysticism may be condensed in what is designated as the very purificatory mantra to be uttered at the very commencement of the spiritual exercise, *viz.*, Ātmatattvāya Svāhā, Śiva tattvāya Svāhā and Śakti tattvāya Svāhā. This mantra is no less significant than the Brahma Gāyatrī of Brahmanism. We have already touched upon this point in an earlier chapter. There is consciousness in every being, be he small or big. The life-activities that occur are by virtue of the presence of this consciousness. This is the motive power that enables a being to know the objective world, to feel the sensations that arise due to the contact to his senses with the worldly objects, and finally to be transformed and moulded in accordance with the nature of experiences gathered by such feelings. The object of this knowing and feeling is to awaken the subject who will otherwise fall into slumber or non-activity. This is not a new thing at all. Is it not our daily experience that when the impact of the outside world is gone or the mind stops to think, one naturally falls asleep? The sensations thus end in the knower who is called the self as against the articles known. The first stage in the Tantric mysticism is to have a knowledge of the Self within the subject. Again, the knower is in every being. When the Sādhaka utters Ātma tattvāya svāhā he is to see the Self as working in the sun and the moon, air and the earth, in the trees, objects where the Self is not still developed to the extent as in the animate ones. The Self thus emanates his rays that ultimately constitute the solid crust of the material world and the physical bodies of the living bodies. The material world, as now apparent, vanishes in his eyes and seems to be a vast sea of consciousness with the individual selves as ripples thereon. This is also called *Sukhāsana* of the Tantrics and the Śūnya, emptiness of the Buddhists. Acquirement of occult powers and *siddhis* is not possible unless the subject can thus abstract the self from himself and the material world. When this is done, the Sādhaka enjoys a happiness unrealised before. Bodily sufferings cannot then move further. He finds himself as established in his self which is without birth, without end and which is the essence of very existence, knowledge and bliss.

The second stage is to utter Jīva tattvāya Svāhā *i.e.* to realise that all these selves which now appear separate, are not really so but form a part and parcel of a Bigger Self of which the individual Selves appear like ripples. This is a stage above the Sāṅkhya knowledge which simply implies the separation of the Self from the body. The Self now looks One, like a garland of flowers knit together by a thread. This spiritual condition is personified by Śiva who is perfectly serene and composed and absorbed in himself. The Tantras contemplate upon him as quiet, seated on *padmāsana*, with the moon as His crown, with five heads and three eyes, all of which terms convey an idea of completeness in himself. One who has left his properties outside cannot lie down in peace, nor can one enjoy happiness who is in want or whose desires are unfulfilled. At this stage the Sādhaka finds himself as one having all his desires fulfilled and enjoys within his self moonlight of having everything within him that manifests itself in the course of present, past and future times. Having all the objects within himself, he is in a quiet and placid contemplation of them. The eye does not see, the ear does not hear, etc. It is really the self that is the actual seer, hearer, etc. Our senses being classified under five categories, namely, seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling, the Śiva of the Tantras is portrayed as one possessed of five heads. His faces are also five in number, of which four are presented towards the four cardinal points and the fifth one is turned upwards, *i.e.*, turned inwards. Śiva is thus the God of Detachment and being the self-effulgent principle from which the individual selves proceed, which are enjoyers of sorrow and happiness, birth and death, growth and decay, is himself Mṛtyuñjaya, the Conqueror of Death. When a Sādhaka attains this stage, he has vision of the real subjective world in which he finds himself as holding up his entity in the course of time—Present, Past and Future. He sees himself in the Past, he feels himself in the Present and he sees that in the Future he will also remain in tact. When uttering ātma tattvāya Svāhā, the Sādhaka finds his self spread in each and every object in space and by uttering Śiva Tattvāya *S*vāhā he finds himself spread in the vast expanse of time and by such practice he feels the self as Changeless, Formless and Eternal on the one hand and constantly undergoing changes, assuming new forms and marching towards death on the other hand.

The third stage is to utter Śakti tattvāya svāhā which is meant to acknowledge the existence of a Śakti or Power which sets Śiva, the undifferentiated self into commotion and breaks the massive self to tiny individual selves always in motion and assuming new formations. Śiva, as we have already seen, is a Yogeśvara, is serene in his attitude and solemnly abstracted in his self. When His yoga will end, unless there is a power behind to rule over Him ? This Śakti is the Puruṣottama of the Gītā which controls both the Sākṣara and Akṣara and is the end of the Upaniṣads. The Tantrics call it the Ādyā Kālī or Mahāmāyā as explained earlier in this chapter. It is she in whom both the Sākṣara and Akṣara merge. In Tantric parlance it is said that Śakti devours the Great Śiva and brings Him out again whenever She likes. This is a state which may be compared to sleep, when all our sensations and perceptions are lost. If there were no power to awaken, the sleep would be but another form of death. Again, when we rise up, all our activities return and we take up the thread of our work. The Sādhaka is to worship this Śakti as mother from whom he originates, in whom he has his being and in whom he will be finally merged, which denotes an identification of his self with the Mother. It is hard state to realise, and the mystic account of the Tantric Sādhakas that we have already offered, refers to this fact.

The Sādhaka is to remain in this stage as a Mukta Puruṣa till the Great Mother in her infinite mercy takes him up, as She is the ultimate governor of the universe and it is at Her will that the universe is created and will be withdrawn into herself. She is Kāmākṣyā, the Goddess of Kāma, from whom arise all desires and her counterpart Śiva is Kāmeśvara in whom all desires are fulfilled. So there is no question of rising above this plane, unless She wills it.

Beyond this plane is the Ānandamayī, *i.e.*, the Goddess rolling in bliss, the chief Goddess of the Tantras. She corresponds to Brahma of Advaita philosophy. In Her, all ideas of self disappear, not to speak of the disappearance of the world. While the Advaita philosophy has laid stress on the static aspect, Tantra lays stress on the dynamic aspect which is represented by Her standing posture, stamping one of Her legs on the self which She seeks to revive and the other one high up in the air, meaning thereby that the fruits of the actions performed by the self are again absorbed in her and kept up with loving care for re-distribution in the next or future births. When the Sādhaka sees the Mother, one feels himself eternally at the feet of the Mother, drinking the nectar of Her vision, and attains a stage where there ia neither birth nor death. He may remain there as long as he likes or he may come down to the earth for the welfare of all. There is, therefore, no talk of the oneness of the Mother with the Sādhaka at this stage, and hence all conceptions where the need of worship is absent fall through. In a higher stage, which is not attainable by *sādhana* but by *kṛpā* (mercy) of the Mother, the Sādhaka loses his separate existence for good and becomes one with the mother. The lives of all mystics testify to this. Śrī Caitanya, Ramakrishna, Ramaprasad all experienced *Brahmajñāna* but liked to worship the Deity of their adoration as Personal Īśvara.

The stages of *sādhanā* in Tantra are briefly three. These stages have been elaborated in three contos of Śrī Caṇḍī, which is the grammar of all Tantras and combines in one the essence of the Tantric knowledge, just as the Gītā is the essence of the Vedas.

The Tantric knowledge is founded on a unification of Śiva and Śakti who represent consciousness within and conscious force which works through its three fundamental *guṇas viz,* sattva, rajas and tamas by their power of creation and destruction. In the womb of the Śakti-tattva lies the seed of the world. It lies undisturbed there, so long as the Sattva attribute preponderates; but when the attribute of rajas (works) gets the upper hand, the seed sprouts forth into creation which again spreads in infinite variations. Finally, when the attribute of tamas predominates, the entire creation is withdrawn within the Mother, which in philosophy is called dissolution of the world. To a Tantric the existence is eternal sometimes in a mainifested condition and sometimes in an unmanifested way. The Śakti is not unconscious and the Knower of Śakti is termed Śiva who is an emblem of pure undifferentiated self. Śiva is without action, without growth and changes, without coloration and is ever existing in quietude and beatitude. He is Mahākāla, *i.e.*, in him the present, the past and the future are merged. Kāla proceeds from Him but He is not influenced by Kāla which is the cause of birth and death. It is to satisfy Mahākāla that the Śakti brings out the constantly changing world phenomenon, and when Mahākāla is propitiated, there is no more work of limitation or covering up by the Śakti. The two are united in an undefinable state which is designated by the Tantrics as Ānandamayī, the stage of supra-happiness. When She rises up, the first idea that appears is I am Brahma, *i.e.*, I am cognisant of the great power that resides within. This is known as the *Sāttvika* stage. Then there is a desire in Her to display the forces that lie dormant and see again the surging of these forces and enjoy thereby. This is called the *Rājasika* stage where consciousness is on the point of being divided into two, *viz.*, infinite consciousness and infinite force or into Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as the Vaiṣṇavas say, to relish the *rasa* that lies in each other. Finally, the infinite force and infinite consciousness, being inadequate for the purpose of realising the detailed rasa, they spread out into time and space, the time being inhabited by *tanmātras* and the organs of knowledge and the space being inhabited by the tattvas of sound, touch, form, taste and smell and the five organs of action (Karmendriyas). Then the field is laid for the creation of the Jīvas and the world with their limited consciousness and limited capacity of enjoyment. While in the process of enjoyment, the Jīvas undergo changes and ultimately meet death. The seed of the Rajas is so powerful that with death there is no cessation, just as after sleep there is re-awakening The Jīvas and the world are only re-born to enjoy afresh and die until finally they know themselves. It is only when the subject knows himself that he becomes one with Supreme Being and is released for good from the sufferings attendant with births and finally attains the highest stage of spiritual bliss.

CHAPTER X

TANTRIC SYMBOL AND PRACTICES

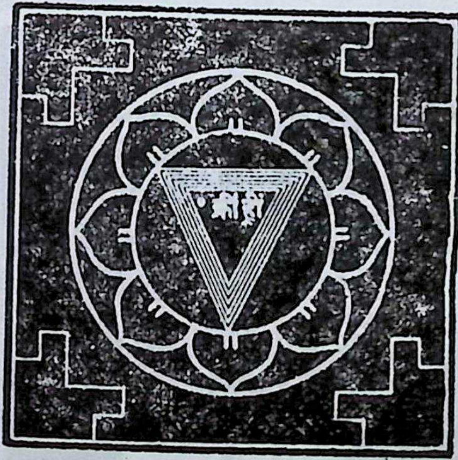
The Tantras make an extensive use of mystic symbols which are very often liable to be misinterpreted. We have called them mystic because they help the devotee to be in close communion with the Deity, which is the true significance of myticism. Whether they help or not is to be found out by practice. No amount of literary discussion can prove or disprove their truth. Again, there are many practices which are so much loaded with details that their significance, if there is any, seems to be lost.

First, the conception of the Tantric Deities who are good many in number, appears at first sight to be incongruous. Some have two hands, some six, some eight, some ten, some thousand. The hands are again placed in different positions, in different attributes. They often hold different weapons and auspicious articles. Some of them are in standing postures and some have one leg dangling and one leg crossed. They are differently coloured. Tantras lay down in very detail the construction of the image, and are, very particular about this.

The Tantric conception of images is a visualisation of an idea or a particular Śakti whom the Tantric worships. Just as an artist who has to portray famine on canvas personifies it, gives it a terrible monstrous figure on a background of a wasteland, laid barren by burning sun with trees bereft of leaves and spread over by the dead and dying men, women and children with emanciated figures and scantily dressed in the last throes of life crying for food and drink, so Tantric gives a concrete shape to the Deity he worships. Let us attempt to explain our point from the well-known figure of Kālī. As we have already pointed out, Kālī of the Tantrics is only another name of the Brahman of the Brahmanical cult. If one takes into account the various attributes of Brahma and endeavours to give it a symbolie shape, it will assume the figure of Kālī in its every detail. Brahma is inscrutable, without attribute and beyond the reach of the mind and words. Kālī has therefore been painted naked and dark in complexion which hides within itself the power which creates, sustains and destroys the universe. Modern physics also corroborates that all the colours combined together will annul one another and give a dark effect. From coal, says the chemist, quite a large number of shades of colours have been separated. The *dhyāna mantra* of the Goddess Kālī speaks of her complexion as 'Mahāmeghapravat śyāmāṁ tathā caiva digambarām' meaning thereby that Kālī is of the complexion of dark clouds surcharged with impending showers and She has all the quarters of the heaven as her covering. Another important point in the image of the Kālī is that She takes her stand on the breast of Śiva, or, to be more precise, She plants one of her legs on the breast of Śiva while her other leg is a little over His thigh. The two legs stand for forces of manifestation and unmanifestation. When Brahman, in whom the seed of very things of all times resides, contemplates to manifest Himself, the first thing that emanates is the Self, which is anothar name of Śiva, the emblem of self-consciousness. The Tantric conception in this regard closely follows this idea. Kālī is seen to stand over Śiva, which means, without self-consciousness Kālī cannot proceed a step. All her steps are on the breast of Śiva, who is also represented as Mahākāla—comprising Past, Present and Future. By the pressure of Her leg on Mahākāla, the Present issues out of the Past and by Her other leg She withdraws the Present within Herself to come out again in future. In this way every detail of the image inspires a high spiritual idea, meditation of which illumines the heart of the Sādhaka.

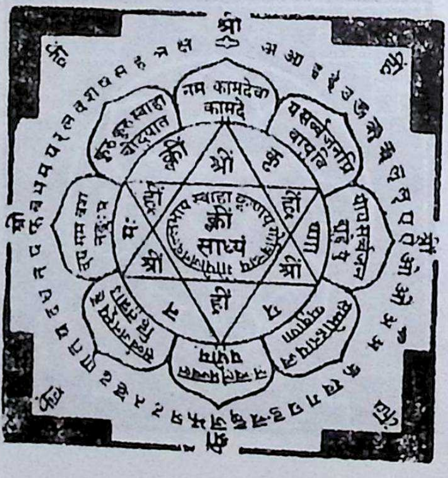
To take another instance, Durgā has a yellow colour, which stands as an intermediate colour in the dispersal of light that takes place when white rays of the sun are allowed to pass through a prism. On one end is violet, merging on black, in the middle is yellow, while red occupies the other end. In creation, this is very suggestive. The red represents the rising sun, the symbol of manifestation while the violet means the end of creation and yellow occupies a position between creation and destruction. Hence is it not scientific to portary Durgā, the Great Mother, in yellow colour ? The toe of Her left leg is on the Asura. Is it not a fact that there is a power within us which keeps us who are *asuras* by nature, active. Her ten hands represent the tenseness. The weapons denote the attributes of the immediate activity of the Deity.

The Yantras, in like manner, represent the ideology of the Sādhaka. A Tantric can worship without the image with only a *ghaṭa*, a water-pot covered with foliage of mango leaves and a green coconut with the stem painted with vermilion, but never without a Yantra. The Yantra is pointed in front of the image and various coloured powders are spread over it. We give below two figures, *viz.*, Kāli Yantra and Kṛṣṇa-Yantra. Their patterns and the letters and words inscribed within the very many crevices or *dalas*, as they are called, are indicative of the ideas they are meant to convey. For example in the Kṛṣṇa-Yantra there is first a *ṣaṭ-koṇa*, which means one triangle intersecting another triangle in an inverted position, inscribed in a circle. The symbolic name of the Deity is given in the spaces within the circle but outside the *ṣaṭ-koṇa*. Within the *ṣaṭ-koṇa* is given *bīja-Mantra* of the Deity. This is circumscribed by eight petals of the lotus within which are inserted नमः कामदेवाय सर्वंजनप्रियाय सर्वंजनसम्मोहनाय ज्वल ज्वल प्रज्वलय सर्वजनस्य हृदयं मम वशं कुरु कुरु स्वाहा and the Gāyatrī mantra. *viz.*, कामदेवाय बिद्महे पुष्पबाणाय धीमहि तन्नोऽनङ्गः प्रचोदयात् । Again, outside the petals are the letters of the alphabet from अ to क्ष. Outside the letters are the doors and manrats of the structure where the Deity resides.



It will be too long and intricate to give explanation in a popular treatise like this of all the points. The details are too many to be put in writing and hence these are to be learnt from a preceptor. The central idea in the Yantra may be put in a nutshell thus : The temple of the Deity is surrounded by buildings and Kalpa trees. The temple is supported on pillars. There is an altar within, on which resides the Deity in all His effulgence served by wives and attendants. On the outside are the gods and goddesses witnessing all these.

Nyāsa is a practice which is liable to be misinterpreted. The universe proceeds from words, which are the combination of the letters composing the alphabet. These are really the creative forces which make the universe. The Tantras regard them as the *Mātṛkās* and worship the power contained in each. Now the physical body of the Sādhaka seems to be apart from conscious forces working within. The eye derives its power of sight from within, similarly the other senses derive their powers from within. These powers are different and have all got different names. Can there be anything without a name? A name and the object it stands for are closely related. When one thinks of the sun, *i.e.*, names sun, the idea of the physical sun at once flashes before the mind. The Tantrics, therefore, describe the letters as symbols of elemental forces which again combine together to produce a multitude. Now the Tantrics while practising Nyāsa, have to forget



their material existence and think that such and such letters, *i.e.*, forces are working at such centres. Every force though working everywhere has a centre, *viz.*, the centre of sight is the eye. By such Practice the whole body seems to be surcharged with force tending towards identification with the Deity.

Nyāsa is of different types and also varies with the Deity of adoration. The most common of them are: Aṅga Nyāsa, Kara Nyāsa, Pīṭha Nyāsa, Mātṛkā Nyāsa. Candramauli Nyāsa, etc.

Japa is another mystic practice which is highly eulogised in the Tantras. Japa means repetition of the *bīja-mantra* as given to the Sādhaka at the time of initiation. Repetition of a mantra, unless received through a preceptor, is said to be ineffectual. Every thing appears mysterious to an uninitiated. The mantra, to the Tantric, is the Deity itself, just as to the Vaiṣṇavas, the name and the named are one. Mantra is not to be reckoned as a bundle of loosely federated and unmeaning letters but as revealed to the Ṛṣi in the hour of his profound illumination. The idea running behind *japa* is that just as a gramophone record when made to vibrate correspondingly gives out the sounds recorded in it, so the *mantra* which is the concentrated symbol of realisation when received from one in whom the *mantra* is conscious energy, when repeated by a Sādhaka, elevates him to the same tune and becomes ultimately revealed to the adept Sādhaka. These *mantras* are eternal and possess wonderful capacities.

To elucidate this point further we quote below the observations of a learned writer on this point as they very aptly, and at the same time quite briefly, describe the cardinal features of Tantric Sādhanā.—"The Hindu Ṛṣis discovered the great energy (Birāṭ Śakti) which is the source of creation, and Nāda, Prāṇa, Śabda. etc, are only synonymous for that Cosmic Energy. This Śabda or Nāda, as Cosmic Energy is the soul of this universe, and, as the breath of living beings, constitutes their life. This Nāda or vibration is the source of the universe and, as illumination, is also consciousness. This gross form of Nāda supports things of the universe as their soul, and its subtle form, again, is represented by the Absolute Goddess (Parameśvarī) as Chinmayī Kālī. The Hindus attempt to realise the subtle form through the gross one and to reach illumination by generating the corresponding vibration The recitations of the name of God, all aim at awakening illumination through vibration.

"The Tantras explain clearly that Cit and Śabda, illumination and vibration, reach two parallel aspects, the subtle and gross forms of the same thing. Nāda or Śabda is the very first Manifestation of Cit and just adjacent to it. The external things and their shapes are materialised forms of vibrations, and in them the Cit becomes more latent and hidden. In Nāda or vibration, the Cit is not so materialised, but retains much of its fluidity, and it is because of this fact that it is easier to awaken the Cit element in and through vibration (Nāda) than through external things and forms.

"Nāda is really intermediate between Cit and Śabda, neither so solid as external things nor so fine and absolutely immaterialised as Cit. The utility and efficacy of Nāda Sādhanā cannot be overestimated. It is the invaluable discovery of the Tantras and the priceless gifts to the world, that the Vibration (Nāda) and illumination (Jñāna) are two parallel manifestations of the same Cosmic Energy or Śakti and that, as such, the one can lead to and awaken the other without fail. The vibrations can be easily got hold of in the forms of breath (Prāṇa) and Śabda (Dhvani), and Cit can be realised through them, which by itself eludes the grasp of even amongst the most discriminate and intelligent men. (Yamala Tantra).

"The Dhvani or Nāda acquires immense strength when joined with Suṣumnā Nāḍi, which is supposed to be the central nervous system. The Suṣumnā is really the point of harmony and is represented to exist intermediate between the 'Iḍā' and Piṅgalā on the left and right respectively. It is the nervous or physical counterpart of synthetic and harmonious thought. As thought attains great strength when this synthetic point is reached, so also does sound gain immensely in strength when the point of synthesis, which is marked by a peculiar resonance, is reached. The rhythmic and harmonious sound is the nearest and the most immediate physical expression of Cit or consciousness and is thus expected to awaken illumination. Stress has been laid upon the Suṣumnā in the Tantras. The *mantras* which remain mere dead letters so long they are not uttered with Suṣumnā joined unto them, acquire wonderful powers as soon as the Suṣumnā joins with them. (tantra Sāra).

"The gross body is to be harmonised through regulated physical postures (Āsana); the internal vital processes are to be harmonised with regulated breath (Prāṇāyāma); the higher cerebral centres are to be harmonised through regulated sounds with Suṣumñā and the mental processes are to be harmonised through meditation (Bhāvanā) and thus harmony in the physical, physiologicol and mental spheres has to be attained in order to prepare the proper pre-condition for spiritual realisation. In fact, thought, sound or vibration, and motion are but the three principal factors in creation and they represent the three stages of the same energy in three different planes. That there are points of harmony in thought, harmony in sound and harmony in motion is clearly perceptible, though their location in the nervous centres has not yet been scientifically traced. The Tantras found in the harmony the secret of all realisation, and preached a method that sought harmony in all planes and sides of existence. Harmony lies in the middle of two extremes, and the Suṣumnā also lies between the two extremes Iḍā and Piṅgalā. In one word, Suṣumna is harmony, and to discover this reconciliatory meeting point (Sandhi) or the point of synthesis or 'Suṣumnā' is everything that seems to be the central aim of the Tantric mode of Sādhanā.

The Tantra recognises three stages of Sādhanā and marks out five sub-divisions of the entire course of discipline. The three stages are purification (Śuddhi), Illumination (Sthiti) and unification (Tarpaṇa), corresponding roughly to Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna. The five sub-divisions are ablution (Snāna), gratification (Tarpaṇa) meditation (Sandhyā), worship (Pūjā) and complete self-abnegation (Homa). Snāna and Tarpaṇa (purification of body and mind) prepare the Sādhaka for the next stage. Meditation aud worship (Sandhyā and Pūjā) of the Divine become possible when a divinity is earned through prior purificatory process. 'Only the divine can worship the Divine.' (Worship of Śiva who represents absolute purity and goodness as all white, is only possible by a hero free from all impurities). The next stage is the complete self-surrender and absolute merging. This is the stage of unification and is described in the Bhagavad Gītā by the word Viśati (XVIII.– 55) *i.e.*, enters or merges into one. This is what is signified by Homa, the culminating process in Tantric Sādhanā. The Jīva Śakti, which, through purification, previously attained an element of divinity and became Deva Śakti, now becomes identified with Śiva Śakti. Then no distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped remains. The Jīva Śakti lies dormant at the root of the spine (Mūlādhāra) and passes through the gradually higher and higher centres in the base of the penis, navel, heart, throat and forehead to the cerebrum. The controlling cerebral centre is Parama Śiva. The Suṣumnā is the innermost nerve-current that joins the lowes and the highest nerve centres, the Jīva and the Śiva. The bondage of the individual consists in his being determined by the lower nerve centres ! Liberation, again, happens when the highest centre controls and sub-ordinates all the other lower centres. The conscious working at the higher centres, the definite turn from the control of the lower self by the Higher is, perhaps, what is signified by the awakening of the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti.

"The Tantra prescribes different methods and rules for the conduct of life for men of different equipments and capacities. It distinguishes three classes of Sādhakas in order of merit, *viz.*, the Paśu, the Vīra and the Divya. The vīra is not only allowed but is definitely instructed to include such things as wine, meat, etc., as articles of offering to God. The Paśu is not allowed even to touch or have a sight of those things. The method prescribed for the Vīra is more risky than holding a snake. The Divya Sādhaka need not undergo the trials of the Vīra Sādhaka. He does not require the help of external objects for rousing spiritual sentiments and the meditative mood emerges spontaneously in him.

"The Tantras again mention different kinds of Ācāras for different class of Sādhakas at different stages of their development. Vedācāra which forms the first and the lowest stage, comprises the Vedic rites that are to be strictly practised. Kulācāra is the highest stage which does away with all rules and injunctions of the Śāstras. For the Kaula there is neither any Vidhi nor any Niṣedha, neither merit nor demerit, neither virtue nor sin.

"When we remember how the Tantra recognises three distinct types of Sādhakas according to their respective capacities and temperaments (Adhikāra) and also how it combines within itself, Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna and follows the philosophy of the Upāsanās of the Purāṇas and how it shows us the entire course of spiritual discipline beginning with the lowest physiological process and ending with the sublime philosophical intuition, we ought to have no hesitation in declaring that the Tantras sum up all the important features and elements of Hindu Sādhanā."—*Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā.*

After all these it will not be proper, as we have already observed, to take the Pañca Makāras, the five M's beginning with Madya, Māṁsa, Matsya, Mudrā and Maithuna in their literal sense. The Tantras have indulged in mystic language with double meaning on many occasions. These were catch-phrases to the common people in the old days when the society was still in the making. The later Tantrics have termed them as symbols of *yogic* processes. The terms are reflections of the amorous raptures of the mystic Sādhakas whose joy resembles that of a lover meeting her beloved after long waiting.

The simple meanings of these terms follow :

Madya is the nectarine stream issuing from cavity of the brain where the soul resides.

Matsya means the suppression of vital airs.

Māṁsa is the vow of silence.

Mudrā means inter-weaving of fingers during religious worship. It is a physical process that is calculated to enhance concentration of the worshipper.

Maithuna is meditation on the acts of creation and destruction.

Meditation about one's self resolves itself into three main enquiries :—What am I ? Whither shall I go ? What is my end ? Reflections about these questions naturally lead to contemplation, about creation. *Cognito ergo sum* can be properly understood only in relation to the creation of the universe. In fact, the philosophy of Self is intimately connected with the Philosophy of the World and the Philosophy of God. One naturally leads to the other two. Now, the Tantras hold that creation results from the union of Puruṣa with Prakṛti, which has been figuratively expressed in the Phallic symbol of Śiva, the emblem of creation. If we leave aside a few exceptions, the whole world of living things is the offshoot of sexual creation. A sexual creation is only a very rare exception where the propagation of the species takes place by the fragmentation or divisions of living cells or by the fusion of male and female gameta lying in the same organism. But they seldom meet our eyes. Hence a man is apt to think about the origin of life as an act of sexual creation. This empirical knowledge about creation, on the ground of analogy, has been extended to the creation of the whole universe which has been figuratively expressed as the fruit of the union between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Tantras have expressed this union in the esoteric figure of the united Phallic symbol of Śiva and Śakti (Puruṣa and Prakṛti) united together, the emblem of creation. *Maithuna* too contemplates about the wonderful origin of creation and its final end. Coition is a provision of nature for creation. The Tantric creed implies that the act of coition should be viewed and practised only as an act of creation (with which instinct every creature is born) for the sake of multiplying oneself and not merely as a vehicle for the gratification of lust. That is still the cardinal principle of Hindu marriage, *i.e.*, for begetting issue.

Āgamasāra thus explains the Pañca Makāras :—

(1) Madya—

"Somadhārā kṣared yasya Brahmarandhrād Varānane/
Pītvānandamayīṁ tāṁ ya sa eva madyasādhakaḥ//

If a man drinks the nectrine stream that issues from the cavity of the brain, he is filled with joy. This is Madya or wine. It stands for the yogic process of *bhūta śuddhi*, by which the Sādhaka turns inwards and unifies the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti which is lying dormant at the Mūlādhāra with the Parama Śiva who is at Sahasrāra.

(2) Māṁsa—

Maśabdād rasanā jñeyā tadaṅgyā Rasanā priye
Sadā yo bhakṣayet Devi sa eva māṁsasādhakaḥ.

The word ma means a tongue from which proceed words. One who always feeds on them is called a worshipper of Māṁsa. That man is really *yogin* who has controlled his speech. Our thoughts are also so many words expressed mentally. Hence, Māṁsa is Pratyāhāra, *i.e*, withdrawal from world phenomenon. It may also mean *khecharī mudrā* which prescribes the raising of the tip of the tongue to the palate.

(3) Matsya—

GaṅgāYamunayormadhye matsyau dvau carataḥ sadā
Tau matsyau bhakṣayet yastu sa bhaved Matsyasādhakaḥ

Two fishes are always moving about between the Ganges and the Yamunā. He is the worshipper of fish who eats them up. Both the Gaṅges and the Yamunā represent the two nerves Iḍā and

Piṅgalā. The two fishes represent respiration, drawn in and sent out. So the worshipper of fish means one who has suppressed his vital breaths. This is Prāṇāyāma by which the desires of the flesh are overcome and the Sādhaka enjoys a quietude unrealised before.

(4) Mudrā—

Sahasrāre mahāpadme Karṇikā mudritā caret /
Ātmā tatraiva Deveśi kevalam pāradopamam //
Sūryakoṭipratīkāśam, candrakoṭisuśītalam
yasya Jñānodayastatra Mudrā-Sādhaka Ucyate
Atīva kamanīyaṁ ca Mahākuṇḍalinīyutam.

On the great lotus of a thousand petals situate on the head resides the soul. Though it is like millions of suns in effulgence, it is like so many moons in coolness. This Supreme Being is extremely charming and is accompanied with Kuṇḍalinī Śakti. One who acquires the knowledge of this charming soul is the worshipper of Mudrā. This is the yogic state of Dhyāna, when the mind is fully impressed with the idea to be realised.

(5) Maithuna—

Maithunam paramatattvaṁ Sṛṣṭisthityantakāraṇam
Maithunāt jāyate siddhir Brahmajñānaṁ sudurlabham.

Cohabitation is at the root of creation, preservation and destruction. It is regarded as a great principle in the Śāstras. It achieves all ends and confers the most difficult knowledge of Brahma. The esoteric meaning of Maithuna in the sense of yogic process is Samādhi and the Sādhaka forgets himself by the recitation of the principal attributes of God and contemplation about the creation and its end.

In another Tantra the esoteric meaning of the Pañcamakāra is thus explained :— Matsya or fish is that which washes away the dirt of attachment, lays down the route to Mokṣa or emancipation and destroys eight-fold miseries. Māṁsa or meat is what produces auspiciousness or joy and is dear to the gods. Pañcamakāra is like my very life in all worships. Without it no one can recite the Mantra with self-abnegation and so he cannot achieve success. Joy is the great Brahma and pañcamakāra expresses it.

It must be admitted that wine, meat, fish and women are objects of great temptation. Ramakrishna has said, if a worshipper can overcome the call of the flesh, the road to eternal bliss is clear to him. It is not at all an easy affair for a man to have a young beautiful damsel before him and worship her for a considerable length of time with articles of offerings as a goddess without feeling the least lustful impulse within himself He is to take a sip of wine after dedicating it to the Goddess, which is a long affair. He takes it not for intoxication but for concentrating his mind on the object of his devotion. He is to take meat and fish not because they are palatable, but because he must be in good health for performing religious rites. Thus we find that in Tantric form of worship, a worshipper is to approach his god through diverse objects of pleasure. He is to relinquish his desire and even his own self and employ the various pursuits of enjoyment as instruments for the attainment of spiritual discipline. Let us conclude our remarks on the subject with the observations of two famous Tantras on this point.

It is written in the Kulārṇava Tantra:—"Imposed on by false knowledge many labour under the mistake that they may acquire piety by drinking wine, etc. It is their mistake. If by drinking one could attain to spiritual consummation, all drunkards would have done the same. If by taking meat one could have acquired piety, then every man could have been pious. If by cohabiting with a woman, one could have attained emancipation, it would have been easy for every body. Useless drinking is accompanied with all the evils described in the Vedas; it is a great sin. Even to smell such a wine is iniquity. Every sort of wine is to be avoided by the twice-born. Even if one accidentally casts a look on wine, he should look at the sun. If by accident he smells it, he must practise *prāṇāyāma*. Thus useless drinking has been prohibited in the Tantras. The Tantric form of Sādhanā permits the use of wine for spiritual purpose for bringing about concentration of mind. One cannot offer anything with an impure heart to the Deity. We should purify everything and offer it without any low selfish desire. Gratification of animal appetite is not the object of Tantric worship.

The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra goes further :—

"During the supreme prevalence of the Kālī, when the householders' hearts will be deeply attached to their household objects, Madhutrayam should be used in lieu of the chief Tattva, *viz.*, wine. Milk, sugar and honey are known as Madhutrayam. Considering them to be equivalent to the libation of wine, the worshipper should offer them to the God. Those born in the cycle of Kalī, being naturally of limited intelligence and lustful proclivities, cannot recognise women to be manifestations of Śakti. Therefore, O Pārvatī for them the contemplation of the lotus feet of the Goddess and the reiteration of the Mantra appertaining to their respective tutelary gods, have been prescribed in lieu of their practising the Tattva or Maithuna., Mahānirvāṇa Tantram, Chap. VIII, Ślokas 170-173.

These terms, *viz.*, the Pañca Makāras, are in sooth intended to denote a progressive course of *sādhanā* leading to the realisation of the absolute self. The first of the terms, *viz.*, Madya, means a turning within from the outside, the erstwhile field of one's activity. Being cut off from the consciousness within, a Jīva finds himself miserable and a creature in the hand of the world phenomenon which has tremendous influence over him. Physical and natural phenomenon stand as great impediments against the realisation of his desires. For a moment he turns inwards and takes his seat on the shore of the ocean of consciousness. He sees that he is born in this consciousness, lives in it and ultimately when he dies he is lost in it. He enjoys a tranquillity and peace of mind, never experienced before. But the serenity of his mind is being occasionally disturbed by thoughts of various kinds which flash through the mind like lightning electrifying the atmosphere. Unless these sudden explosions of thoughts can be prevented, it is not possible for the Sādhaka to dive deep and have an introspective view of the self. This is done with the help of *citta-saṁyama* or by *pratyāhāra, i.e.*, by withdrawing oneself from these thoughts and taking back his original seat. This is what is meant by the second term, *viz.*, Māṁsa, meaning a control over words and thoughts. The Gītā says that whenever one is dislodged from *āsana* by thoughts, he should withdraw himself from them like a tortoise withdrawing its legs. The Tantras say that these sudden outbursts of *citta* are the consequence of desires in the sub-conscious stage. Unless one can conquer his passions for world-possessions and self-enjoyment, he cannot bring his mind and one's senses under check. Prāṇa is infinitely more powerful than the Mind, which, in fact, works in association with the senses in accordance to the dictates of Prāṇa. The third term is Matsya, which as we have observed, is symbolic of *prāṇāyāma* by which the constant flickering of *prāṇa* in this direction or that can be stopped. The Sādhaka has to practise *prāṇāyāma* or regulate his breath which is the cause of surging up of all desires. In Tantric parlance this is known as Prāṇapratiṣṭhā. The Sādhaka has to think within that in fact he does not see. It is the consciousness within that is the real seer; he does not hear, the consciousness within is the real hearer. In this way he offers all he has got to Prāṇa and himself becomes dispossessed of all attributes. Moreover, the Prāṇa within, who is the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, etc. is to be identified with the Universal Prāṇa, who is the great originator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. But in spite of all these, the *saṁskāras* of past and present life persist and they influence Prāṇa in their own way. This situation can be overcome by repeated surrender at the feet of the Deity, the Sādhaka adores. This is what is meant by the fourth term Mudrā, which literally means making signs and movements indicating the Sādhaka's attachment towards the Deity. The Sādhaka recites the name of Deity and reads with a flowing heart the *stavas* or psalms which will still his heart. The Sādhaka here experiences unique sensations. He has now reached a plane which Mind cannot penetrate. He has a vision of the Eternal Soul from whom all the changes observed in the material world proceed. The fifth term is Maithuna which means that the Sādhaka has no more a separate existence. He is merged in the Deity. All limitations here vanish and the Sādhaka is blessed with the glimpse of the Ānandamaya stage in which all senses of self vanish. This is beyond positivity and negativity, beyond all ideas of Time and Space. The highest pleasures that a man, and why man alone, even the Prajāpatis, Vasus, Gandharvas, Devatās and others are capable of enjoying, seem as insignificant as a drop in this ocean of bliss.

These terms may be taken in the sense of five chief Asuras of the Śrī Caṇḍī, *viz*, Madhu, Kaiṭabha, Mahiṣāsura, Śumbha and Niśumbha. The Tantras are not so much concerned with the outside world as with the perceptions, conceptions and experiences felt within. The outside world with its forms, taste, smell, sound and touch moves us considerably. The attractions we feel for them in our heart which deeply intoxicate us, have been represented by Madhu and as soon as we feel attracted towards an object, whatever that may be, we forget all other things and like an insect boring into the very core of a fruit, we are as if shelled within it. This is Kaiṭabha. It is mentioned in the Caṇḍī that when Brahmā awakens, the two Asuras Madhu and Kaiṭabha commence torturing ihm. It is significant that the very word 'madhu' is wine. While enjoying worldly things the Sādhaka who is intent upon realising God must not be led away by the intoxications of life and be bound thereby like an insect caught in its own meshes. In the Purāṇas, there is a story that a fowler propitiated the God Śiva with the juice oozing from his bag of flesh while hiding himself in the dead of night in a forest infested with beasts. It is significant here that 'māṁsa' means meat from which the skin has been removed. We do not really enjoy the concrete objects but are concerned with emotions provoked in us as a result of coming in contact with them. These emotions and attachments are 'māṁsa' with the juice trickling from it. The Sādhaka has to offer all these pleasing sensations which madden him to Śiva and himself remains unperturbed. Matsya, as we have already explained, is the up and down current perceived within. Here it stands for *Praceṣṭa*, *i.e.*, an attempt for possessing the object of the desire. When an object stimulates our senses, we are first intoxicated, then engrossed in its thoughts and then when attachment deepens we are eager to have it. Mahiṣāsura is the symbol of this constant endeavour for the realisation of one's desire. The Mahiṣāsura ultimately perceives that that very Goddess with whom he is fighting is governing him by placing Her toe on him. This feeling of individualism has to be surrendered to the Mother by *prāṇapratiṣṭhā*. Finally Mudrā and Maithuna are represented by the two Asuras Niśumbha and Śumbha who are symbolic of Fate (Saṁskāra) and Puruṣakāra. Their only desire was to possess the Mother with all Her glories. Is it not a fact that while engaged in acquiring an object outside us, we have at length to grapple with it ? Finally we have the satisfaction of having desires of our heart fulfilled. For the time being so intense is the joy that even the object we have acquired goes out of our mind. The Sādhaka should unlike Niśumbha and Śumbha, surrender this to the Mother. In the fourth stage the Sādhaka has a vision of the Mother with attendant feelings or *bhāvas*. He feels the joy of realisation, namely seeing Her, touching Her, talking with Her but still the ultimate goal of being one with the Absolute, which is the consummation of all Tantras, is far from being realised. There are flashes of glorious light, melodious sounds, and divine sights all around. Ultimately the throbbing, which is meant by *mudrā*, comes to a stop and the Sādhaka attains the highest knowledge that he is Brahma himself. The last stage comes when there is no duality, no worshipper and no Deity, but Brahmānanda in its full glory. This stage comes when the Sādhaka offers all his sensations, *viz.*, hunger, thirst, lust, shame, avarice, intelligence, reverence, knowledge and even his conscious self to the Mother. It will not do to offer articles of food and drink to the Mother; the very pleasure one feels during eating or drinking, in seeing sights, in hearing sounds, etc. should be surrendered to the Mother. The Sādhaka will act as a mere machine through whom desires and pleasures due to their fulfilment pass over to the Mother, who is the originator and taster of all these. The practice of *pañca makāra* was originally conceived in this light. In taking wine, the Sādhaka stops a little and attempts to trace whence desire for drinking it comes, where the pleasure arising from drinking goes; how he is moulded by that pleasing sensation and where he, as so formed, goes. It will be seen that his mind cannot go to that extreme, only he himself in his joyful state can reach the plane. By following its course a state of consciousness is attained which even without drinking wine, is intensely bracing and exhilarating. Similarly, the Sādhaka must withdraw himself from the pleasures of eating. He has to keenly follow the trend of the pleasure, without himself being engulfed in it. He has to find out the centre whence this sort of pleasure emerges and where it melts away; much in the same manner that a detective watching over the doings of a criminal, his movements and associates, finally traces out his whereabouts. This is the way of conquering *tattvas* and acquiring *siddhis* and occult powers. By such exercise the Sādhaka can have the pleasures of seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, tasting without the medium of outside world. And this is liberation. A being is bound inasmuch as he has to procure everything from outside by struggling against for some opposing forces and a Sādhaka who has conquered the *tattvas* will find them at will within himself and can bring them out on occasions.

CHAPTER XI

SOME MYSTIC TECHNIQUES

Not only the Tantras but many other Hindu religious Scriptures make use of several mystic techniques regarding the forms of worship and certain appendices appertaining to it as for instance the Mantras or the cryptic expressions used in religious worship; the Āsanas, *i.e.*, how the worshipper should sit for physical posture at the time of worship, the Mudrās, etc. The Hindu sages from the earliest time have laid great stress on physical processes that lead to spiritual discipline. Control over physical organs and senses is absolutely necessary for mental concentration. It is needless to say that neither contemplation, nor prayer, nor any worship can be effected without proper concentration of the mind. These mystic techniques are meant for enhancing mental concentration and for helping the physical processes necessary for this purpose. We shall in this chapter mention some of the most prominent techniques common to almost all forms of Hindu worship and Hindu Sādhanā.

Mantras universally found in all forms of Hindu worship and in all schools of Hindu religion are not mere meaningless jargons. They are rather phonetic symbols either of profound metaphysical propositions, or of deep spiritual truths. Some of them involve highly intricate physical process of Yoga-Sādhanā (as Prāṇāyāma): and some are intended to enhance the concentration of the mind in the perfect state of which the worshipper loses all consciousness of everything else—even the consciousness of his own separate existence apart from Deity of worship. In a world, the worshipper loses himself in his Deity, and his own existence, for the time being, becomes merged into that of the Deity. This is what should be in perfect contemplation and worship conducted with sincere devotion and faith. The *mantras* are calculated to help the aforesaid mental concentration of the worshipper. About the true spirit of the mantras Śiva thus speaks to Pārvatī in the Mahānirvāṇa Tantram:

"O Mistress of the celestials, the presiding spirit of the Mantra is the all-pervading Eternal one,—above discussion having no form, beyond speech and incapable of being apprehended by sense."—*Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, Ch. III,V. 36. Thus Mantra is, in fact, an invocation of the Deity by some mystic phonetic expressions. Of these Mantras the most sacred one is Praṇava or Om. In fact, the most sacred word in the Hindu Scripture is Om, known as Praṇava. The Praṇava consists of two vowels and one consonant : Akāra, Ukāra and Makāra. Akāra denotes the Protector of the Universe ; the Ukāra the Creator thereof and the Makāra the Destroyer thereof. Thus Om is the phonetic emblem with Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. According to the Vedas and the Upaniṣads the word Om is expressive of one True God who is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the universe. In the language of the Tantras it expresses Śiva and Śakti or Hara or Gaurī; and you may denote it in philosophical phraseology as Puruṣa and Prakṛti.

We cannot better express the significance of the mystic esoteric word Om than quoting an elaborate note on the word by a learned English scholar, well-versed in the Tantras :—

Three powers have emanated from the Praṇava representing Original Force, *viz.*, will, active energy and knowledge. The will-force in the parlance of the American spiritualists headed by Andrew Jackson Davis is Gaurī or Mahākālī. She is associated with Maheśvara agreeably to the action of disorganising tendency in her. The Active Energy pertains to Brahmā and is the Mahāsarasvatī. Associated with Brahmā, she brings about genesis of things through the principle of Rajas. The power of knowledge pertains to Viṣṇu and is Mahālakṣmī. Associated with Viṣṇu, she protects the world by virtue of the principle of Sattva or goodness. The Deity that is the object of worship here, is the conscious enlivening the primaeval Prakṛti or Original Force. This Original Force dividing herself into three parts agreeably to the action of the three Principles has developed into Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. Brahmā associated with Savitṛ creates; Viṣṇu associated with Mahālakṣmī protects; and Śiva associated with gaurī destroys. Will-force, Action-force and Knowledge-force are parts of prime force, and in the same way Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara are parts of the Turīya Brahma established in the Original Force. Consequently Praṇava signifies the Brahma residing in the Original Prakṛti, holding the three Principles in equipose. He it is that is designated as the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer. If Brahma were not present in Prakṛti, she would not possess the power of acting, nor would she be endowed with consciousness. But each interpenetrating each, Prakṛti has received the consciousness of Brahma and Brahma has received the active energy of Prakṛti. The conscious Brahma resident in the Original Force is signified by Brahma Bhāva.

The Tantras have divided the worshippers into three classes according to their mental proclivities or Bhāvas. There are three kinds of Bhāvas : (1) Paśu Bhāva, (2) Vīra Bhāva (3) and Divya Bhāva.

Paśu Bhāva—Men who attempt mastery over their passions and impulses but have not yet attained self-control.

Vīra Bhāva—Men of heroic temperament, who have attained complete control over their senses. They include such things as wine, meat, etc. as offerings to their Deity.

Divya Bhāva—Men with divine tendency, *i.e.*, of noble propensities.

The Tantras go further. They point out the periods of human life when a particular tendency predominates. It is thus stated in Vāmakeśvara Tantra :—From the birth upto the sixteenth year one has Paśu Bhāva, in the second period of life upto the fiftieth year one has Vīra Bhāva, and afterwards Divya Bhāva. These three Bhāvas are ultimately unified,—which state of mind is Kulāchāra. By this man becomes god-like. These are mental proclivities and they should be mentally cultivated.

The Tantras, again, have divided the Tantric worshippers into several classes :—

(1) Vedācārīs
(2) Vaiṣṇavācārīs
(3) Śaivācārīs
(4) Dakṣiṇācarīs
(5) Vāmācārīs
(6) Siddhāntācārīs
(7) Kaulācārīs

Of above classes, Dakṣiṇācārīs Vāmācārīs are the most important. A Dakṣiṇācārī worships the goddess according to tantric rites and rituals laid down in the Vedas and a Vāmācārī according to Tantric rites. The Dakṣiṇācārī worshipper performs the duties as enjoined upon by the Vedas throughout day and practises *japa* with concentration at night with Mahāśaṅkha rosary, the Vāmācārī worshipper spends the daytime as a dutiful ascetic worships Deity with Pañca Tattvas or Pañca Makāras at night, forming a *cakra*, in a secret place. The Vāmācārī should thus meditate upon the Lotus Feet of the Deity. He is known as Vīra Sādhaka.

Kulācāra however is considered as the highest among the *ācāras*. A Kulācārī makes no difference between a son and a foe, between a palace and a hut, between a benefactor or a malefactor, beween brass or gold, between insect and man. He always meditates upon his self and sees himself everywhere.

The Tantras, again, mention some mystic practices under the name of Cakras. These are the darkest of the dark oracles, and none but the initiated can realise its real significance. We shall describe here some of the important Cakras.

(1) Deva Cakra—"I (Śiva) shall now describe Deva Cakra which the celestials always practise. In this five female agents are Rāja-Veśya, Nagari, Gupta-Veśya, Deva-Veśya and Brahma-Veśya. The royal harlots are those who are devoted to the service of the king, secret prostitutes belong to family, dancing girls are the celestial prostitutes, and Brahma prostitutes are those who visit sacred shrines. And any Maiden when she is in menses is called Nagari. These should be engaged in Deva Cakra."

(2) Rāja Cakra—"Five beautiful and most charming maidens of five castes Yāminī, Yoginī, Washerman, Cāṇḍāla and Kaivarta should be engaged. The worshipper should next offer honey, wine and meat. This is Rāja Cakra. By its influence one acquires piety, worldly gain, desire and emancipation and lives in the celestia region for sixty thousand years."

(3) Vīra Cakra—"I shall now describe Vīra Cakra by which worshippers soon acquire spiritual consummation In it a capable man need not offer all but only the best articles. Meat of birds or beasts is most desirable. All sorts of corn, white, red aud yellow flowers should be collected. One should fix in his mind one hero. This is Vīra Cakra. Then offering presents to the preceptor, the worshipper should make presents to the hero imagined. By this ritual all sins, even Brahmanicide, are washed away. If Cakra

is devoid of presents and ordinances, it yields no fruit."

The significance of these *cakras* is that the female agent referred to should be worshipped as the Great Mother by the devotee unruffled by passions and temptations of meat of birds or beasts, which is nothing but sacrificing of attachment and animality.

These mystic practices pertain to Tantric Sādhanā or yoga (such as Pañca-Muṇḍa Āsana, etc.); they do not form any indispensable part of daily or common form of Tantric worship. Their efficacy is known only to the initiated and can hardly be understood by the laity. We shall now conclude with the famous Bhairavī Cakra as has been described in the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra that its details may help the reader to have some idea of special Tantric practices intended for spiritually advanced persons, who are above temptation and who possess fullest control over their senses. Śiva speaks of the Bhairavī Cakra thus to Pārvatī:—

"As regards the Bhairavī Cakra, O dear! there are no special rules, and this auspicious Cakra may be performed at any time without much distinction. I shall relate to thee the manner of practising this Cakra that confers happiness and prosperity on its adorers, and when worshipped through this Cakra the Supreme Goddess soon fulfils one's desires. In the beginning, the Kaula priest having spread a good seat on a delightful piece of land and purified it with mystic aphorism *Klim* phaṭ should make himself seated thereon. Then the wise worshipper should describe on the ground both a triangular and quadrangular figure with red lead or red sandal-paste or simply with water. Then the wise worshipper having brought a beautiful Ghaṭa (earthen pot) besprinkled with curd and Akṣota (unhusked rice), bedecked with fruits and new twigs, painted with Tilaka (peculiarly shaped marks on forehead) of red vermillion, and filled with scented water and having placed it on the ground of worship by means of Mantra, should offer it incense Dīpas (light). Then worshipping the Ghaṭa with fragrant flowers and frankincense, he should invoke therein his tutelary deity. In these cases the ceremony of worship is to be carried on in the abridged form. Now, O thou adored of the gods, listen, as I describe the peculiar features of this Cakra. In it there is no necessity of placing or using nine receptacles or vessels commencing with Guru. The devotee or worshipper should take one of the Tattvas (wine, etc.) or articles of worship according to his own will and placing it in front of him, consecrate it with the Mantra *phaṭ* and then look upon it with his spiritual eyes. Then placing flowers and incenses on the Aliyantra (receptacle for wine) he should meditate upon the Goddess, Ānanda Bhairavī and the God Ānanda Bhairava successively. He should meditate upon the Goddess, glorious in the prime of her youth with a semblence of eflulgence like the newly risen sun, with the lotus of her face blooming forth under the nectarine influence of charming smiles, deeply delighting songs and dances, adorned with various kinds of ornaments, robed in beautiful garments, and holding in her lotus-like hands boons and benedictions. Thus having meditated upon the goddess Ānandamayī, he should begin meditating upon the God Ānanda Bhairava.[1] He should represent before his mind's eye the God Ānanda Bhairava, saying:—I meditate upon the God, white as the mass of camphor, with eyes extended like the petals of a lotus, with his effulgent person decked with beautiful ornaments and robed in charming garments, with his left hand holding a vessel full of nectar and his right one holding the Sudhāguṭikā[2] The devotee having thus meditated upon them both, should contemplate their love for the exhilarating beverage, then worshipping them with incense and flowers, purify the wine by at first uttering the Praṇava and then saying the wine by name or salutation (Oṁ namaḥ Om Hrīm Kroṁ Svāhā). He should then further purify the wine by reiterating the Mantra 'Oṁ Hrīṁ Kroṁ Svāhā. During the supreme prevalence of the Kalī when the house-holders' hearts will be deeply attached to their household objects, the Madhutrayam should be used by them in lieu of the chief Tattva. Milk, sugar and honey—these are known as Madhutrayam; and considering them to be equivalent to the libations of wine the worshipper should offer them to the God. Those born in the cycle of Kali, being naturally of limited intelligence and lustful proclivities, cannot recognise women to be manifestations of Śakti (or the supreme goddess of the Tantrics). Therefore, O Pārvatī, to them the contemplation of the lotus-feet of the goddess and the reiteration of

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1. Such is god as we find in other ancient Hindu scriptures. God in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, like many things else is Ānanda, the Fountainhead of joy, spirit of gladness.
2. Fish and flesh held in the palm in a particular prescribed manner.

the Mantra appertaining to their respective tutelary gods have been prescribed in lieu of their practising the last Tattva or Maithuna. The devotee should, however, purify and inspire each of the Tattvas that had been collected with the Mantra Oṁ Hrīṁ Krīṁ Kroṁ Svāhā. Thereafter, closing both his eyes and realising in meditation that every thing is pervaded by the Supreme God, he should drink and eat having, as before, at first presented them to goddess Kālī. This is the Bhairavī Cakra scrupulously concealed in all the Tantras, and, O gentle lady, I have disclosed before thee, this highest of the high and holiest of the holy religious rites. In practising the Bhairavī Cakra and Tattva Cakra, the worshipper should under all circumstances, O daughter of the Mountain, marry himself according to the Śaiva mode. The devotee who in a state of celibacy practises devotion to the goddess Sakti undoubtedly reaps the sin of cohabiting with others' wives. When the Bhairavī Cakra begins to roll, all the Varṇas are high class Brahmins[1] and when it stops the Varṇas are distinguished one from the other. In the Bhairavī Cakra there is no distinction of caste, and there is no restriction about one eating the remnants of others' meals. The worshippers joining the Cakras are my own portion. In practising this Cakra no hard and fast rules regarding time and place or the eligibility of persons are to be observed. Any thing (fit to be used in the Cakra) brought by any one may be accepted and employed. Whether it is brought from a distant land, whether it is ripe or unripe, whether it is brought by a devotee or one of the beastly nature, a thing as soon as it is accepted in the Cakra becomes pure and holy. At the commencement of the Cakra, O great Goddess, all obstacles struck with fear and terrified by the spiritual power of the devotee take to their heels and fly away. Piśācas, Guhyakas, Yakṣas, Vetālas fearfully fly away, even only hearing that Bhairavī Cakra is practised here. Tīrthas, Mahatīrthas and celestials with Indra at their head, appear at the place where the Bhairavī Cakra is practised. O Śiva, the place where this Cakra is practised is a Mahatīrtha (a highly sacred pilgrimage) and it is superior to all other Tīrthas (places of pilgrimage). The inhabitants of heaven come there to partake of offerings presented to thee. Any thing ripe and unripe (fit for use or not), be it brought by any one whether a Mleccha, Śvapaca, Kirāta or Hūṇa becomes purified and holy as soon as it is placed in the hand of the principal devotee.

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[1] In spiritual ecstacy all social distinctions between man and man vanish.

Beholding the Bhairavī Cakra and my devotees therein who are my semblences, the corrupt sinners of Kali are liberated from the trammels of their sins. When the influence of the Kali *yuga* is on the ascendance, the devotee should not conceal the performance of this Cakra, but should practise it everywhere and at all times. In a Cakra or during the continuance of the worship, idle talk, fickleness, garrulity, spitting, passing wind through the lower organs of the body, and distinction of caste should be shunned. Those who are narrow-minded, those who are mischievous, those in whom beastly nature preponderates, those who are sinful, those who are atheists, those who find fault with the Kaula (a system of Tantric mode of worship) and those who blame sacred books of the Kaulas should be left at a distance from the Cakra. Introducing a *paśu* (in whom animal proclivities predominate) in the Cakra out of love, friendship or fear, even a Vīra (an advanced devotee) is dragged into hell, being cast off from the Kuladharma (or the Kaula mode of worship).[1] Whether Brāhmaṇas or Vaiśyas or Śūdras—those who betake to the Kaula form of worship, are always aborable like gods themselves. He who is proud of his own higher caste and recognises caste distinction in the Cakra goes to dreadful hell in spite of his being fully conversant with the Vedas and the sacred scriptures. Pious Kaulas pure at heart when practising Cakra are so many Śivas where there could be any room for sin in them ?"

Mahanirvāṇa Tantra VIII

It is evident that a Cakra is a special mode of *yogasādhanā* in which only the highly spiritually advanced persons can take part. Persons who have complete self control over senses may gather together in a Cakra and worship the goddess in the midst of the objects of great temptations, wine, women etc.—a fiery ordeal for a worshipper, which the Tantras forbid men of anmal proclivities. Only highly spiritually advanced people who possess complete mastery over themselves can conquer these temptations under the spell of spiritual ecstacy and concentrate their minds upon God. One must not venture upon such risky things unless one is perfectly sure of himself that he can venture to undergo such practices. A Cakra is pervaded by a cosmopolitan spirit in which there is no distinction between man and man, no restriction about caste and food and to become absorbed in meditation of god in the midst of strong temptations. Only the Paramahaṁsa can venture in such a practice. The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra says : "The best devotee practises the Cakra mode of worship only during special services." It is not a thing of daily practice, nor does it pertain to daily rituals of worship. It is a congregation of spiritually advanced people on some special occasion. Like Cakras, certain other rites and rituals have been enjoined by the Tantras pertaining to Yoga Sādhanā.

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[1] Only he who possesses the highest self-control and who is a perfect master of his senses should be taken in the Cakra.

The ceremony of Sādhanā or purification is of vital importance in the rituals of Pañca Makāras. Worship without purification is fruitless. The worshipper must purify Tattvas or wine, fish and flesh before he dedicates them to the Deity. He is not allowed to partake of them unless he purifies them according to prescribed rituals accompanied by proper Mantras. We cannot offer anything with impure heart to the Deity who is the object of devotion and worship.

Now, anybody and everybody is not fit for Tantric form of worship; only the noble are fit to receive initiation. "One should be born in a good family, be of pure heart, manly, diligent in studying Vedas, intent on doing good to his parents, pious, well read in the Śāstras (theology), devoted to the service of his Guru, expert in understanding the esoteric meaning of the Tantras, wellbuilt, of a firm mind, and working for the benefit of his after-life. He must avoid useless and trivial works, always practise Tantric rites, be a master of his passions, be shorn of idleness and pride. He must show respect towards his sons and other relations of his spiritual guide."

The above-mentioned qualifications are essential for a man for being initiated in Tantric form of worship. Nay more, there are also directions for the time of initiation. Thus the Nīla Tantra observes :—

"On the eighth day of the dark fortnight of a month, on an auspicious day, and on an auspicious conjunction in Pūrvabhādrapada under the auspices of Anurādhā or Revatī, during lunar eclipse, in the month of Āśvina or Kārttika, it is the best time to receive initiation; the Great Aṣṭamī is the most auspicious day for accomplishing religious profit, worldly profit and desire: Rohiṇī, Śravaṇa, Ārdrā, Dhaniṣṭhā, Uttarabhādrapadā, Uttara phalguni, Puṣya and Śatabhiṣa are the most auspicious stars for receiving initiation."

All these directions at the first sight appear to be simply meaningless, but they are not so. They are helpful to mental concentration and Yoga. But why does the great sage insist upon Yoga? What is its intrinsic worth and efficacy is treated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XII

ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF YOGA

Yoga is the mystic science, the accepted basis of all religious forms. It transforms human body so that the Divine can effectuate the purpose of creative evolution. The presence of the Divine in man is coincident with a continuous process of tranformation and purification, of elimination of their coarser elements with a view to the supreme identification with the object of worship.

The highest purification of human body depends upon sound knowledge of the physiological functions. This science of human body has nothing in common with the anatomical description of human body as laid down by medical science of the West. Analogy may be drawn but there is no localisation or correspondence. The Cakras and Nāḍīs cannot be identified with parts of the nervous system, but they belong to a quite different plane composed of subtle matter belonging to the subtle body.

The word *yoga* is derived from the Sanskrit root युज् which conveys the idea of union or addition, but in special sense it means withdrawal of mind from everything and concentrating it upon a particular object or Deity. It is that psychic condition that enables one to be in closer communion with the Deity. It is in fact the science of the union of human being with the Divine dwelling within him. It is the sum of physical, psychical and mental processes which bring about deep transformation of human being, an awakening in him of the new man which is unattainable by a man in his normal state. It awakens new modes of consciousness of new perceptive faculties, of new power and potentialities that exist in the sub-conscious region, as if in stupor, of occult powers that lie dormant, the use of which quite transforms the delicate complex of which we are made. For this, utmost selfcontrol and strict moral and intellectual discipline are necessary.

The sage Patañjali in his Yoga system lays down the fundamentals of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga which consists of bodily postures and regulations of breath to ensure the greatest concentration of the mind.

It may be stated here that the Tantrics declare that an upright and pure life, a deep and intense appeal and devotion to the Divinity automatically awaken the Divine Śakti in man as can be accomplished by an elaborate process of purification and other methods as laid down above. He thereby acquires "Siddhis", such as clairvoyance, lightness, mastery over the physiological instincts, *e.g.*, sleep, thirst, hunger, etc. and it becomes possible for him to obtain nourishment not from the corporeal elements of foodstuffs but from subtle elements.

The essential principle of yoga according to Hindu doctrine is a faith in the existence of Supreme Being—Brahma, the unknowable the unborn, the unthinkable. His activity manifests itself in two aspects—the *Puruṣa*, the essence of all things, the eternal omnipresent, the creator and the *Prakṛti*, the mother, the primordial undifferentiated substance which supports or bears up all manifestations. In the Prakṛti, the three forces are in action. First, the *Sattva* or the ascendant force, which tends towards attainment of perfect virtue, which awakens consciousness and perfects creation. The second is *Rajas* which is an expansive dynamic force and implies activity, desire and which modifies the excess of both Sattva and Tamas tendencies, and the third is *Tamas* which implies darkness, inertia, idleness and veils consciousness. The object of the *Yoga* is the liberation of these three forces.

To practice Yoga, the regularization of breath plays an important part in it, inasmuch as by its action, the circulation of the vital fluid is modified. By such regularization and modification the *Prāṇa* or vital fluid of the psychic is acted upon, which in its turn modifies the mind. It is upon this regulation of breath and *mantras*, that the Tantras lay the highest emphasis.

Its efficacy and worth are also obvious from the non-Tantric standpoint of view. All the religious scriptures of the Hindus declare in one voice that the ultimate goal of human life is to realise God in life or to be one with God. And this is the final object of religion and all forms of religious worship. The great systems of Hindu philosophy save Sāṅkhya lend emphatical support to it Yoga has been found by the great sages of ancient India as the most effective means for that and of all other ways and means; Yoga has been found, at every step, by the great Hindu sages of ancient india, to be the best and highest form of spiritual discipline for the consummation of the highest spiritual bliss. Yoga is necessary for the highest mental concentration It is only by Yoga that one can develop all potentialities and powers that lie dormant in the sub-conscious region. To awaken our fullest self to all its great potentialities there is no other means but Yoga. Every ardent form of worship culminates into Yoga or complete absorption with the object of meditation and prayer. To realise God in life, or to be one with God, Yoga is essential. The reason is not far to seek. Both experience and intuition are necessary in religion. Mere experience cannot carry us far. It is intention that shows the way and helps us to realise the highest end. One without the other is incomplete and inadequate for spiritual purpose. Here we quote the observations of a European writer, and the reader will find the necessity of Yoga, so strongly insisted upon by the ancient Hindu sages, for moral and spiritual perfection.

"Underlying the apparently numerous phases of activity in the life of nature and humanity, there are two main directions of the movement. In the great world of nature they are seen as disintegration and integration; in its special phases as motion centrifugal and centripetal; in man's particular world of conscious activity as analysis and synthesis.

"Through whatever phase of life these two main movements operate, their characteristics are the same; on the one hand—separating, elaborating, scattering; on the other gathering—co-ordinating, simplifying, unifying. Going to extremes either movement would, theoretically, nullify itself, the one in annihilation, the other in inertia, the equal bankruptcy of poverty and plethora. This, however, is apparently not the intention of life.

"Between expansive energy and contractive substance as we find them in life (and leaving aside recent scientific formulae which make energy a mode of substance, and substance a phase of energy), there is a perpetual interplay for the purposes of life's necessity of continuity, and a perpetual shifting of the point of balance on either side of the centre of poise for the purpose of life's pleasure in variety and interest. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, as

Vedic thought and art have personalised these processes (which is not denying but fulfilling, the declaration of Hermetic vision that in the cosmos all things are persons), dance the dance which keeps life alive; but sometimes Kṛṣṇa, who is embodied energy, strays away from home (which is round about but not exactly on the pole of life); and sometimes Rādhā, who is imbodied substance, remains too sedulously at home; and out of these defections from the perfect have arisen the stories that life loves to tell itself for self-edification and entertainment, stories of the limitations wherewith substance and form must shackle and manacle energy in order to provoke it into dynamic definition and of the struggle and adventure of energy towards liberation from its limitations.

"The history of humanity is the record of this interplay of resistance and release of the process of disintegration whose end is death in one or other of its many forms, and the circumventing of this process by the expedients of integration for the preservation of identity. In group life this integrative necessity shows itself, and never so urgently and largely as today, in alliances, in trade, politics and otherwise. The balance of activity has oscillated too near the danger-point of group-disintegration and the pull in the opposite direction is correspondingly emphatic.

"In individual life the preservation of identity has, generally speaking, evolved no more intelligent technique than that of self-assertion and acquisitiveness, both of which tend to defeat their own purposes, since they relate the individual to the others on terms of separateness and antagonism, which reduce the nourishing and continuing properties of ideal human association as regards both the body and the Psyche.

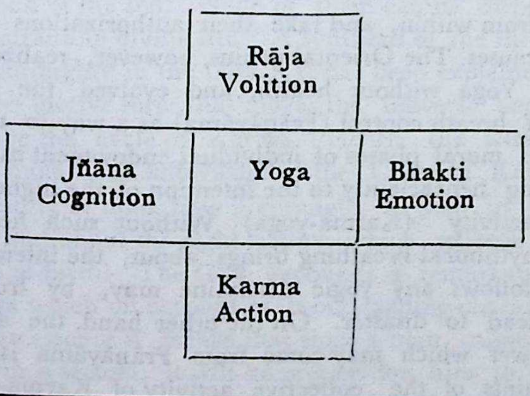
"The medieval monastic discipline of the occident sought to establish and carry it on to kingdomcome; but their method, while it was deep, was narrow. It responded to a realisation of the possibility that, if we do not consciously align the individual will and action with those of the 'divinity that shapes our ends', that divinity which is the law behind and within life, will eventually end our shapes. But it touched life through an extensive emotion cramped by a creed. It mistook theological formula, which were means to ends, as origins, because they proved effective, not seeing that life has an amazing knack of utilising and surviving the most peculiar prescriptions from the spiritual pharmacopoeia.

"The oriental genius got nearer the discovery of a complete technique of individual integration. It recognised the possibility of emotional disintegration, but it did not meet it by mental construction. Neither did it meet the trend towards mental disintegration by setting up a counter-trend in the emotional nature of the individual. The wheels of life must revolve in a mutual reaction for a unifying purpose beyond their individual service; but each must revolve on its own centre. It is good advice to 'feel intelligently', it is equally good advice to 'think sensitively'; but for the good performance of these synthesis (not merely the simultaneous exercise of two different functions) both feeling and thinking must be cultivated to their finest flowering, from its own root and according to its own necessities.

"Out of such realization of psychological law arose the Yogas of India; means to the discarding of non-essentials to the work in hand; to the attainment of enlargement and intensity through which the individual achieves integration, first within his own nature, and last between himself and his universe. This is the union which is the etymology and purpose of Yoga.

"India evolved numerous systems of individual integration (Yoga); but for the purpose of this study we shall generalise them as the integration (1) of action (Karmayoga), (2) cognition (Jñāna-yoga), (3) of emotion (Bhakti yoga), (4) of Volition (Rāja-yoga).

The four main Yogas



"In familiar speech these are the disciplines of body, mind, heart and will, each turned in upon itself, yet affecting others, not in the time of specific exercise of Yoga discipline, but in the spontaneous sharing of increased capacity in the activities of ordinary life.

The Yoga thus summarised serves the four basic functions of human entity But they do not serve them completely. Their intention is, as integrating expedients, naturally from without to within, and they have been drawn behind the out-turned aspects of cognition and emotion. Jñāna Yoga is contemplative and only incidentally uses the out-turned function of the mind. Bhakti Yoga is devotional, and only incidentally uses the out-turned emotional function. Yet the mind turned outwards in the exercise of observation (which is the function of science) serves the purpose of the inner light which lightens the path of will; and the emotions turned towards in creative expression (which is the function of the heart) serve the inspiration to action which sometimes calls, sometimes drives, and always accompanies the Will on its explorations in life for further illumination to still finer inspiration.

"Karma Yoga is concerned with the inner aspect of action; that is, with action between entities realised as interacting constituents of a more inclusive therefore higher entity than the external individual. Out of the tendency to disintegration in external action the Occident evolved the partial Yogas of ethics, which seek to control conduct intellectually, and of morals, which seek to control the emotional aspects of conduct. But these expedients can never be effective, because they seek to control individual action from without instead of from within, and take their authorizations from effects instead of causes. The Oriental genius, however, realized also that there is no Yoga without health, and evolved the preliminary discipline of breath control (Prāṇāyāma) as a way to making the physical and moral phases of individual endowment more capable of responding beneficiently to the intention of the higher discipline of group activity (Karma-yoga) Without such health which systematic rhythmical breathing brings about, the intensification of life which follows any yogic discipline may, by frustration or distortion, lead to disaster. On the other hand, the accession of personal power which may come from Prāṇāyāma is preserved, by the restraints of the collective activity of Karma-yoga, from the disintegration that would follow the exercise of such power for selfish therefore separative purposes.

"Now it is precisely because the out-turned movement of the cognative function, which is science, has in the occident been denied the natural restraints of its in-turned movement of contemplation, whose historical expressions are philosophy, that science for all its gifts to external life, threatens the destruction of human achievement if some unforeseen and probably trivial impulses suddenly translated present international suspicions, jealousies and fears into overt action that would bring into play the demoniacal agents of mutual destruction that science has within the last generation conjured out of its witches' cauldron of hellish inventions. It is also precisely because the out-turned movement of emotion, which is creative expression, has been denied the restraint of its inturned movement of aspiration, whose expressions are the religions, that is occidental arts, in some of their more reprehensible and popular phases, have threatened the spiritual destruction of humanity by the disintegration of its aesthetical consciousness and the degradation of its capacities for sensitive reaction to the level of self-destructive forces of sensuality. To meet this double threat there is need for a Yoga of science and a Yoga of art."—James H. Cousins.

It must, however, be clearly understood that the three kinds of Yoga, *viz.*, *Karma Yoga*, *Jñāna Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* are interdependent upon one another. They are but the different ways for the attainment of salvation. As a matter of fact they are the different stages of yogic practice culminating in Rāja Yoga, *i.e.*, the full realisation of the self. None of them can be dispensed with in the way of attaining divine life. A synthesis of the three has been discussed thoroughly in the Gītā. It has been explained there that Karma is the motive force that moves the universe and hence one cannot escape the cycle of Karma. Hence, the wisest course to follow is to have a full knowledge of the Laws of Karma, how it rules the destiny of man, how it entangles a man in the mesh of *Karmaphala* and about the right action which relieves a man from the cycle of re-birth. The Gītā expounds a remarkable theory of Karma Yoga which on account of its outstanding character still holds the field. In essence it means that since a man cannot desist from work even for a second, it will be proper for him to do only the right actions, which have also been explained therein. Hence, a

Yogi should first make it a point to do regularly such actions as have been enjoined upon by the Śāstras and the Gītā. It is only by strict performance of *Karma Yoga* that a man gets pure in heart, sober in temperament and patient in bearing. He is thus in a position to acquire knowledge or Jñāna.

When the heart is thus purified by right action and is unruffled by temptations or by passions, the path is clean set for the practice of Jñāna Yoga which means a realisation of the self and an understanding of the real nature of the universe. With the dawning of Jñāna it appears that our real nature is *Saccidānanda*, immortality and bliss; there is no death nor disease nor sorrow. The devotee sees all as his own self. The self, he experiences, is different from the gross, subtle and casual bodies. It is the witness of the three states—Waking, dreaming and deep sleep. It is the support for the twenty-four *tattvas*. Just as bubbles rise, exist and dissolve in the Supreme Lord, who is the material cause of everything, the pure Ātman by the contact with the five sheaths appears to put on their respective qualities. All these, however, are perceptible only to a pure mind. Jñāna Yoga opens the way to this sort of realisation. A Jñāna Yogi should study the religious books and especially those dealing with the philosophical aspects and verify their truth by spiritual meditation.

When one gains Jñānā or true knowledge, he cannot but be a firm believer in the existence of God. He becomes a Bhakta and surrenders himself at the feet of God. The more one gathers Jñāna the intenser grows his devotion. There are, however, various ways in which devotion to God is developed, *viz.*, Śravaṇa (Hearing), Kīrtana (Recitation), Smaraṇa (Remembrance), Pādasevā (Serving Lord's feet), Arcanā (Worship), Vandana (Prayers and Prostration), Dāsya (Servant-Attitude to God), Sakhya (Friend-Sentiment to God), Ātma Nīvedana (Self-Surrender). These are the steps which slowly and gradually take the devotee to the Supreme Deity.

It may be seen that unless a Yogi passes by the successive steps of Karma Yoga and Jñāna Yoga, his surrender will not be perfect. Even when the heart yearns after complete surrender of the self, the mental discrimination stands in the way and allows suspicion to have full play in the heart. Surrender is a thing that cannot be done in a week or a month. The self-arrogating little ego persists and asserts itself at every stage. Regular practice of Bhakti Yoga has therefore been advised by the great Bhaktas for the gradual development of Anurāga, Prema and Rasa which are but the highest stages of Bhakti.

It thus appears that the first stage in Yoga is Karma Yoga the second stage is Jñāna Yoga and the third stage is Bhakti Yoga. Finally comes the true illumination as envisaged in the sacred books, *e.g.*, Upaniṣads, Tantras etc. It is Rāja Yoga corresponding to the Turīya stage which is beyond the waking state, dreaming state, and state of deep sleep

Thus the necessity of Yoga in Sādhanā is obvious. It is by Yoga that one can attain perfection of the different functions of the mind—Thinking, Feeling and Willing, *i.e.*, intellection, emotion and volition. For the attainment of the highest spiritual perfection yoga is absolutely necessary. That was why the ancient sages of India laid great stress upon Yoga. The Tantras have given the highest prominence to yoga-Sādhanā. In fact, esoteric, physical and psychological processes enjoined by the Śāstras are but so many auxiliary steps to Yoga. We shall conclude this chapter with a few more observations connected with the Yoga in general.

The Hindu Śāstras mention four kinds of Yoga :—

(1) *Mantra Yoga*, (2) *Haṭha Yoga*, (3) *Laya Yoga* and (4) *Rāja Yoga*.

(1) *Mantra Yoga*—It means the mental concentration brought by the process of repeating mentally Praṇava or one and other sacred *mantras* of the Śrutis as well as by the constant mental worship of the Supreme Deity.

(2) *Haṭha Yoga*—It means concentration of mind through various physical processes. The Āsanas are included in the *Haṭha Yoga*.

(3) *Laya Yoga*—The Śāstras say that there are three kinds of forces in a man's nature, *viz.*, higher, middle and lower. By certain yogic processes man realises the higher force by restraining the two other forces. *Laya Yoga* thus stands for the yogic practice which helps annihilation of self.

(4) *Raja Yoga*—It means oncentration of the mind through the suppression of the vital airs :—

The essential features of these Yogas are :—

Mantra Yoga is the first state of yogic sādhanā and must be practised with regularity and devotion by the beginners in Yoga. The norm of yogic practice has been enunciated by the great philosopher Patañjali in the aphorism योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोध: Yoga consists in suppressing at will the activities of the Citta which is only a higher phase of mind with its likes and dislikes, memory of past events, experience acquired in life, etc. It is a hard job to fix one's mind upon the object of one's worship. The Citta always flutters and roams from one subject to another in quick succession. The Mantra Yogi has to withdraw his attention from worldly objects to the object of his desire whenever it becomes shaky and restless. As a means of gaining concentration of mind on the object of devotion, the spiritual aspirant is advised to practise Mantra Yoga. Besides doing the right action, he should be very particular about his food, companions, study, etc. He should follow the instructions about them with sanctimonious zeal. He should be kind-hearted, mild in temperament and non-covetous. He should by all means be truthful and a Brahmacāri. He should practise Yoga regularly and devotedly, keep company with saintly men, read religious books The ultimate object should be the control of the mind.

According to the Tantras, *Mantra Yoga* is immensely helpful in having control over the mind quickly. It consists in uttering the *mantra* as imparted to the disciple by the religious preceptor. Mantra literally means that which makes us free from thoughts which distract our mind so much. Specially the power of the mantra in this respect is great when the preceptor instills it into the disciple, impregnated with immeasurable spiritual potency. Just as the whole tree with its trunk and branches is compressed in a seed, similarly an impregnated mantra received from a Sad-Guru when fully developed sets up in the pupil the Kulakuṇḍalinī Śakti of which mention has been made earlier.

Henee,, a *Mantra Yogi* besides being a *Karma Yogi* begins his spiritual career under directions of a religious preceptor and has to practise Yama and Niyama, the first two steps of the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. This has otherwise been mentioned as *Paśyacara*, because so long as Mantra Yoga is practised complete control over mind is not achieved, nor there is an awakening of Jñāna.

The next stage of sādhanā is Haṭha Yoga. It has been explained in *Yogaśikṣopaniṣad* that just as a bird whese wings are bound by strings, cannot fly freely into the air, similarly, human mind is fully controlled by Prāṇa. It cannot be brought under control by power of discrimination and judgment. Hence, control of mind is hardly possible without control of Prāṇa. It is only when breath is kept under control that the outward movement of the mind comes to an end and the mind comes to a restful state.

Haṭha Yoga prescribes a number of āsanas ond mudrās by practising which an aspirant can acquire control of mind easily and be immuned from various diseases. Prāṇāyāma is also a most valuable means to the end. It helps purification of nerves, and awakens the serpent power, *i.e.*, Kuṇḍalinī Śakti and steadies the mind in concentration, and keeps the body agile and fit. The object is the control of breath and awakening of the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti. This, however, should be practised under the guidance of Guru. It must, however, be clearly remembered that acquirement of some physical force is not the object of Yoga. One should strive for true knowledge because Jñāna alone directly leads to salvation. Just as a bird flies on both the wings, so Karma and Jñāna alone in happy combination lead to the attainment of salvation. All Karma should be devoted towards achievement of Jñāna.

There is much misunderstanding about Haṭha Yoga. It is thought that some practices under the system are terrible and even cause death if done uncautiously. In truth the letter *ha* (ह) stands for the Sun or Piṅgalā Nāḍī and *ṭha* (ठ) for the Irā Nāḍī. Hence, Haṭha Yoga consists in checking the flow of Prāṇa through the Piṅgalā and Irā Nāḍīs and making it flow through Suṣumnā Nāḍī which is centrally situated in the spinal cord, the former two being situated on its right and left sides respectively. When breath passes through the Suṣumnā, Prāṇa becomes restful, and its movements and provocations to the senses, mind, intellect, etc., are no more perceived The real 'I' which was so long concealed under the Prāṇic current now illuminates the mind of the Sādhaka.

Another object of Haṭha Yoga is that unless the body is kept fit and free from diseases, serious obstacles lift up their heads in the way of spiritual progress and in some cases the advancement is stopped altogether. Hence, the urgent necessity of Āsana and Prāṇāyāma, which are the third and fourth steps to Aṣṭāṅga Yoga.

A Haṭha Yogi is termed a vīrācārī by the Tantrics. It is the second *ācāra* as discussed before. In this the Sādhaka depends too much upon his own exertion but it appears later on that his own exertions cannot carry him far. Surrender seems to be the way to God-realisation and stage is thus set for Laya Yoga.

Laya Yoga is the third stage of Yoga and consists in abstracting oneself fully from the external objects and fixing the mind upon the object of *dhyāna*. It is the process by which one can merge his ego with the Ātman which dwells in the heart. When this is done perfectly, Prāṇa feels a unique repose and Citta merges into Ātmā.

Laya Yoga corresponds to the fifth, sixth and seventh stages of the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. *viz.*, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna, when the devotee is absorbed deeply in meditation on the Deity. By practising Laya Yoga the devotee finds his Prāṇa merged into Viśva Prāṇa. The devotee can then send his Pranic flow to any part of his body which is a miniature form of the entire universe and can thus have full knowledge of anything in the universe and have his desires fulfilled. This is the essence of Śakti Sādhanā. When Prāṇa is fully controlled by Laya Yoga, the Sādhaka becomes a Śakti Sādhaka and various *siddhis* come to him. These are, however obstacles in the way of further advancement and close up the passage to the realisation of self. This is the culminating point of the Vīrācāra.

Rāja Yoga is the fourth stage in Yoga and corresponds to Samādhi as mentioned in the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga In this state the Sādhaka loses his own entity in Paramātmā which he finds pervading the universe. In this state the Sādhaka's Citta becomes peaceful, and he finds himself in God and God in himself. This state is a most blissful one and is designated as Ānandam. It cannot be explained by words only. In Tantric language this state is known as Divyācāra and the devotee a Kavala Puruṣa, *i.e.*, a Jīvanmukta Puruṣa.

Samādhi state is the highest state in the spiritual sphere. It has been classified as Samādhi and Nirvikalpa Samādhi. In Savikalpa Samādhi it appears that *jīvas* and *jagat* have no existence apart from God who is the source of all energy of creation, protection and destruction. In Nirvikalpa Samādhi no separate existence of *jīvas* and *jagat* is known; it is a state of bliss which includes as well as excludes all. Here the Sādhaka feels unique bliss in his own self and sports with his own self and is contented with his own self. He is Nirvāṇa Mukta.

A short account of the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga will be found useful to the spiritual aspirants.

Yama—This literally means self-control. In Yoga śāstra Yama stands for Ahiṁsā, Satya, Asteya (non-theft), Brahmacarya and

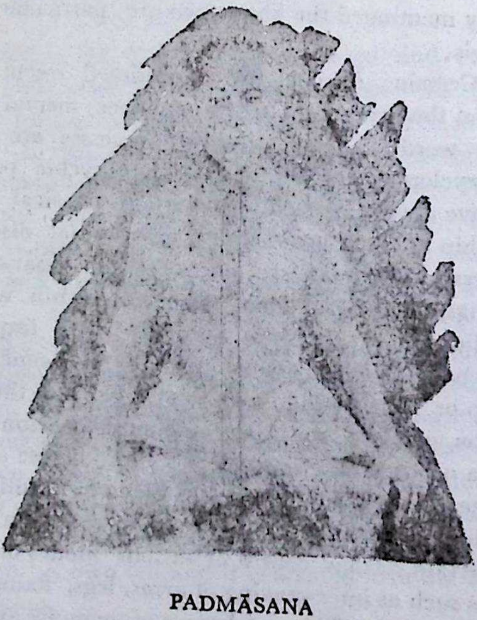
Aparigraha (non-acceptance of gifts). The devotee should not do any harm to any body and be non-violent in thought and actions. He should not kill any being, nor should he cause injury to any body. He should be non-violent, truthful, non-covetous, Brahmacārī and greedless.

Niyama—This literally means regulation. It means Śauca, Santoṣa, Tapa, Svādhyāya, and Īśvara Praṇidhāna. The devotee should keep his body and surroundings clean, take sāttvic food and refrain from doing any prohibited action. He should strive after purity of mind and tranquillity. He should be contented with whatever he gets, respect his elders and do *tapas*, which means he should control his mind, should desist from prohibited actions, should not wound the feelings of any body, should study scriptures regularly, keep company with the good and exercise religious practices as advised by the Guru Study of scriptures and utterance of Vīja Mantras are known as Svādhyāya while prayer to God and dependence on him on all matters is Īśvara Praṇidhāna.

As already mentioned the above two are particularly intended for Mantra Yogis.

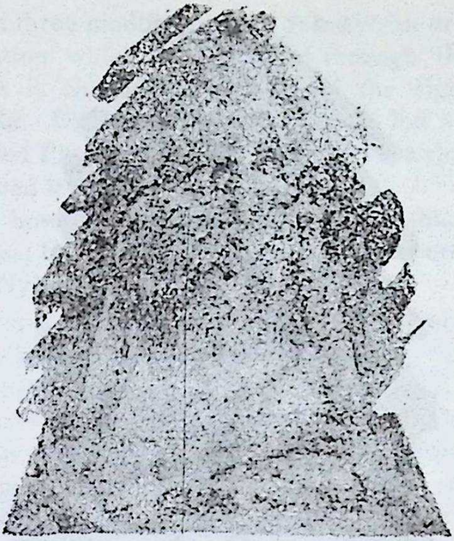
Āsanas—Certain Āsanas are considered essential for the practice of Yoga, that are calculated to enhance mental concentration. In other words, certain physical processes are held to be necessary for developing and augmenting the psychic powers. The Hindu sages have always insisted upon certain physical processes in Yoga and worship as these are helpful to spiritual discipline and mental concentration. Āsanas are one of them. Āsanas have two distinct meanings; firstly, they denote seats on which a worshipper is to sit for meditation or worship. Secondly, they imply different postures of the body which the worshipper should confirm to at the time of worship or Yoga Sādhanā. In tantric worship there are some notable seats on which a spiritually advanced person may sit for practising Yoga or for meditation and worship. These are Śavāsana (sitting on a dead body), Muṇḍāsana (sitting on five skulls of different animals including man), Citāsana (sitting on the funeral pyre), etc.

Again, certain Āsanas, consist of various modes of sitting and bodily postures such as interweaving of arms, legs, fixing the gaze in a particular manner, etc. The most known of them are as Padmāsana, Vajrāsana, etc., which are considered essentially indispensable parts of Yoga practice These physical auxiliaries are calculated to facilitate the practice of Prāṇāyāma which is necessary to control the vital airs of our system. In Yoga practice air plays a very important part, and this air has been divided into five classes, the combination of which maintains life These five are : Prāṇa, Apāna, Samāna, Udāna and Vyāna. Prāna, or the first of the life-winds, has its seat in the lungs. Apāna air is what is breathed out and goes downwards and out through the anus. Samāna air has its seat in the navel and is an important factor in helping digestion. Udāna air which goes up the throat and enters into the brain is the seat of knowledge, and Vyāna air is diffused through the entire system. These are various postures in which a Yogi is to sit when he engages himself in meditation. The most well-known of the *āsanas* are Padmāsana, Siddhāsana, Yogāsana, and Svastikāsana. These are meant to establish a rhythmical breathing in the system which is a pre-requisite for the practice of Prāṇāyāma, the next stage of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. The postures prescribed for these *āsanas* are shown in the accompanying figure.



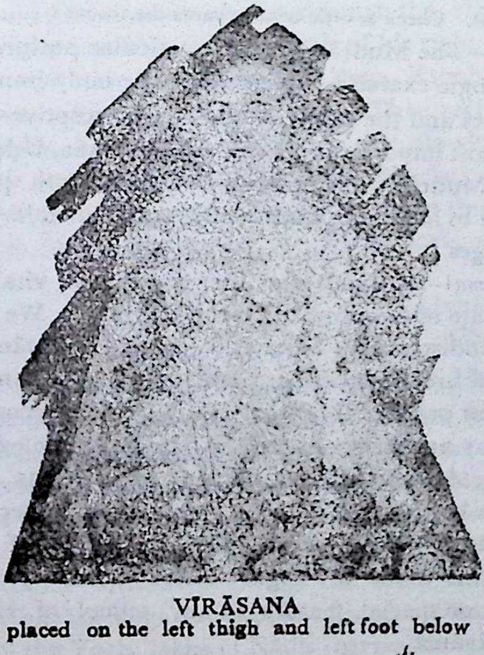
PADMĀSANA

Right foot placed on left thigh and the left foot crossed on the right thigh; right hand placed on right thigh and left hand on left thigh. Backbone kept erect. Sight directed towards the tip of the nose.



SIDDHĀSANA

The heel of the left foot placed just between rectum and generative organ and the heel of the right foot placed above the generative organ. Toes of the right foo placed on left thigh. Backbone erect and cheek a bit bent towards throat. Sight directed towards navel or tip of nose.



VĪRĀSANA

Right foot placed on the left thigh and left foot below the right thigh. Posture erect.

BADDHA PADMĀSANA

Position of feet as in Padmāsana ; right hand turned round the back to hold the toe of the right foot and similarly left hand turned round the back to hold the toe of the 'eft foot. Cheek a little bent towards the throat.

Mudrās—The Mudrās are also particular postures of the body or rather of yogic exercises which make the body immuned from all sorts of diseases and the mind serene and receptive of the subtle truths. The most important of them are Śirṣāsana, Uḍḍiyāna Mudrā, Śakti Cālanī Mudrā, etc. The Mudrās are in sooth postures which are conducive to happiness and can be maintained for hours together without changes.

Prāṇāyāma—It stands for the control of vital airs that are always in a state of flow and reach on the mind. We have already said, it is an indispensable adjunct to yoga. Prāṇāyāma is necessary for rhythmical breathing without which the body cannot be kept fit for the arduous practices of Yoga. Hindu Śāstras recognise five kinds of air that play an important part in human physiology and they are named Prāṇa, Apāna, Samāna, Vyāna and Udāna. Now, to keep these airs in a harmonious balance Prāṇāyāma is necessary. Prāṇāyāma or Nyāsa is practised for the regulation of breath. It is common to all kinds of Yoga. There is hardly any particular characteristic or special feature in any school of Hindu Sādhanā besides Prānāyāma.

There are three modifications of Prāṇāyāma or breathing. The first is respiration which is performed through the right nostril whilst the left is closed with fingers of the right hand ; this is known as *Recaka*. Drawing up air through the left nostril by closing the right is called *Pūraka*. When both nostrils are closed and breathing is suspended it is called *Kumbhaka*.

We shall, however, quote here what the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra says about Nyāsa; because it mentions certain Tantric Mantras for practising the Nyāsa.

"The devotee should heedfully and in accordance with the rules relative to Nyāsa perform this one uttering consecutively, the Tārā and the Sat Cit ekam Brahma and then Oṁ Saccidekam Brahma together with Names, Svāhā, Vaṣaṭ, Huṁ, Vauṣaṭ and Phaṭ and also utter in succession touching his thumbs, forefingers, middle fingers, ring fingers and small fingers and finally the backs of his hands with each other. The process should be gone through from the chest to the hands. Then, O Pārvatī, the devotee should practise Prāṇāyāma reciting all the while the Mūla Mantra or the Praṇava. O Pārvatī, pressing the left nostril with the middle and ring fingers of the right hand and while reciting the Mūla Mantra for eight times he should fill himself with air through the right nostril ; then pressing his right nostril with the thumb of his right hand, he should suspend the respiration, practising the Yoga Kumbhaka and recite the Mūla Mantra for two and thirty times. Then reciting the Mantra for sixteen times, he should expell the air slowly from his right nostril. In this way also he should practise Pūraka, Kumbhaka and Recaka pressing the lęft nostril. I have described the mode in which Prāṇāyāma is to be performed for the success of the Brahma Mantra."

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra
Ch. III, V. 41-48.

The two above practices belong properly to Haṭha Yoga.

Pratyāhāra—It means the withdrawal of the organs of senses from their objects. When the activities of the *citta* are kept under check, the senses cannot get in contact with their respective objects. The activities of the *citta* thus lose their outward course which it was so long experiencing. It slowly becomes unruffled and finally takes an upward course towards realising the self. This stage is to be attained by Abhyāsa Yoga, as explained in the Gītā. There are, in the opinion of the Yogis, lakhs of Nāḍīs (nerves) in our system which are no other than special channels of thought-current. The Yogi has to stop the movements of his ego through these channels and to move through one Nāḍı (Brahma Nāḍı) which runs towards the God-head. This is to be perfected by practice of Pratyāhāra.

Dhāraṇā—When the *citta* is withdrawn from the objects of senses by Pratyāhāra, the mind is in a position to remain fixed for a long time quite unswerved from its position upon the heart centre which is otherwise known as Anāhata Padma. Dhāraṇā is thus a form of mental concentration and it is to be practised so long as perfect concentration is not attained.

Dhyāna—It is another name of meditation which is a stage which can only be realised by those who are adepts in Dhāraṇā. By constant practice of Dhāraṇā no foreign thought-currents arise to disturb the *citta* and the mind becomes perfectly absorbed in meditation. This is Dhyāna.

The above three fall under the category of Laya Yoga.

Samādhi—During the meditative stage individual souls merge into universal soul and immediately emerge from it. The individual soul by the practice of Dhyāna is offering itself at the feet of the Supreme Lord. In Samādhi the penultitude stage is reached. There is no cognition of the individual or universal soul or the worldly objects. This is a state of the Highest Bliss.

CHAPTER XIII

HUMAN KOŚAS AND NĀḌĪS

Hindu science specifies five different *Kośas* or envelopes of the human body. These are *Ānandamaya Kośa*, *Vijñānamaya Kośa*, *Manomaya Kośa*, *Prāṇamaya Kośa*, and *Annamaya Kośa*. The *Annamaya Kośa* is the centre of Ānandam. The *Vijñānamaya Kośa* directly reflects the *Buddhi* of the Kāraṇa Śarīra. It gets in contact with outside objects through the five *tanmātras* or the principles of the five senses of man. The *Manomaya Kośa* is the actual mental body with its processes, its doubts and its wandering thoughts. The mind is the faculty which discriminates between the physical sensations of the five perceptive senses. It can be modified and rendered suppliant. The *Prāṇamaya Kośa* includes the ten senses, which are formed of *prāṇa* or vital breath. It belongs to the subtle manifestation. Lastly, the *Annamaya Kośa*, the material body, consists of the five elements or *Bhūtas*, as they are called, *viz.*, earth, water, fire, air and ether.

The three states of *Jāgrata*, *Svapna*, and *Suṣupta* can be attained according as the vital principle is centred in the *Sthūla*, *Liṅga* and *Kāraṇa-Śarīra*, respectively. In the *Jāgrata* or the waking state, the human being is fully conscious of his ego (Ahaṁkāra), the sense of individuality. The mind believes that it alone is the Supreme Principle and that after its disappearance at death nothing remains. Above this state is the *Svapna* (dream) state. In this state, the *Jīva* or the vital principle retires into the subtle bodies. Normally this state is attained in sleep. The subtle bodies then experience freely the conditions of subtle planes. The beings inhabiting these planes really live. The so-called dead man dwells in this subtle plane waiting to resume a physical form. After death just as the material body reverts to nature and serves again to build the physical supports of life (*e.g.*, vegetable, animal and human bodies) so the subtle bodies dissolve into the planes of matter corresponding to those to which they impart a very strong impregnation proceeding from the beings whose envelopes they were. When a human being is born again, these subtle elements return to him according to the Karma law of affinity and sometimes bring contrary tendencies, contradictory urges and diverse personalities in the same human being. Thus this explains the law of re-birth after death and so on until liberation is attained. The third state is the *suṣupta* state, which is attained when a man attains beatitude. This state is attained by identification with the Higher Self, the living immortal *ātmā*. By reaching this state the human being is liberated from the bonds of physical and subtle bodies.

Upon an analysis of the *Liṅga Śarīra,* we notice the principle which places it in communication with the outside world. There are five *tanmātras*, the essential principles of five human senses, five senses ruling sensorial action and the mind. To this must be added the sense of the ego. This makes altogether seventeen elements in the subtle envelope in the *liṅga śarīra*.

The mechanism of perception is composed in the following manner. The five objective senses (the five senses) are acted upon by the five material elements, *viz.*, the *Bhūtas*. The modification is transmitted to the mind which perceives, to *Ahaṁkāra* which reacts and finally to *Buddhi* which determines. But there are frequent interferences. Internal or external elements connected with the sublte planes, falsify, corrupt and divert the process of perception and intuition. This is what is known as the "play" of manifestation which tends sometimes to become "dull" while at other times to "develop" according to the predominating influence of *Guṇas* which always exist in different measures in every human being.

Over and above the material perception there is continual interchange between the cosmic sphere and the human being. This interchange takes place through some open centres of the sublte bodies. The channels through which this internal diffusion takes place are the *Nāḍis* which connect various openings. These *Nāḍīs* are woven into the Liṅga Śarīra like threads in a spider's web.

There are in this subtle envelope certain centres of consciousness which work very slackly in the normal man, but they can be 'awakened' by certain processes both physical and psychical so as to make them active. This awakening increases the activity and brings about a very great transformation in the human being.

By this awakening and activity of these centres of force, the human being acquires powers over the subtle planes. He becomes master of his subtle bodies and acquires *Siddhis*, such as clairvoyance, lightness, mastery over the physiological instincts, such as hunger, thirst, sleep, etc. It becomes possible for him to get nourishment not by the absorption of corporeal element of food-stuffs but by direct absorption from the *prāṇic* subtle elements.

Siddhis, it may be noted, are supernatural powers or perfections which a man may acquire by Yoga or an ascetic course of spiritual discipline. These are the following :—

(1) Aṇimā—the spernatural power of becoming as small as an atom.

(2) Mahimā, just the reverse of Aṇimā, *i.e.*, supernatural power of increasing size of the body at will.

(3) Laghimā, the faculty of assuming extreme lightness at will.

(4) Garimā, the power of making one's self heavy at will.

(5) Prāpti, the power of obtaining everything.

(6) Prākāmya, irresistible will.

(7) Īśitva, supremacy.

(8) Vaśitva, the power of subduing anything.

Hindu Yogins and Sannyāsins sometimes exhibit miraculous powers to the astonishment of all that baffle all attempts of scientific explanations of them.

Among the Nāḍıs three have been specially dealt with by the Tantric scholars. They are the principal channels of spiritual force in the human system and as such they play an important part in all spiritual exercises. They are Iḍā, Piṅgalā and Suṣumnā. Of these, three, Suṣumnā is the chief and plays an important part in the transformation. It is through the Suṣumnā that yogic power works. So we will describe the Suṣumnā first and then deal with the other two.

The Suṣumnā is the principal Nāḍı of the human being. It is situated inside the Merudaṇḍa (the cerebo-spinal axis). It begins from the Mūlādhāra, the lowest centre of the human body, that is above the anus and behind the penis. It passes through various centres in the spinal cord and ends at the spot situated between the eye-brows. It is of subtle matter consisting of various forces. The three *guṇas* are present in it in the form of three concentric Nāḍıs. It is uniform, long, straight and erect. Through it passes the *Kuṇḍalinī*, the Divine Śakti or Force by which liberation is attained.

The Nāḍıs, Iḍā and Piṅgalā also begin from the Mūlādhāra and rise towards the spot in the fore-head between the two eye-brows but in a serpentine movement from left to right in the case of the Iḍā and inversely from right to left in the case of the Piṅgalā. They rise in a circular path surrounding each centre but without actually passing through it like the Suṣumnā. These two Nāḍis meet at the spot between the eye-brows and then separate again. The one proceeding from left penetrates the left nostril, the other penetrates the right nostril. These Nāḍis are subtle and absolutely invisible to the physical eyes. It is the Yogis who can actually see them and determine their position and direction.

Inside the Suṣumnā, again, there is a finer *nāḍi* called *vajra* which regulates the flow of electric energy in the human system. It extends from the brain to second cakra, *viz.*, Svādhiṣṭhāna. Inside the *vajra nāḍī*, above described is the *citriṇī nāḍī*, spreading out like a spider's net. It is the vehicle of the auspicious sound of Oṁkāra. At the lower extreme point of this *nāḍi* is situated the *mūlādhāra*. Through this *citriṇi nāḍi*, from the very centre of the Mūlādhāra cakra, rises the subtlest of *nāḍis* called *Brahma nādī*. It passes through all the *cakras* to the Sahasrāra. It is the vehicle of *nāda* which is finer than sound. It is the medium of the most subtle flow of energy in creation and is the cause of libido that is responsible for the downward (centrifugal) and upward (centripetal) current ever present in the system. The downward flow leads to animality and the upward flow, *viz.*, *nāda* to Brahmapada.

CHAPTER XIV

CAKRAS

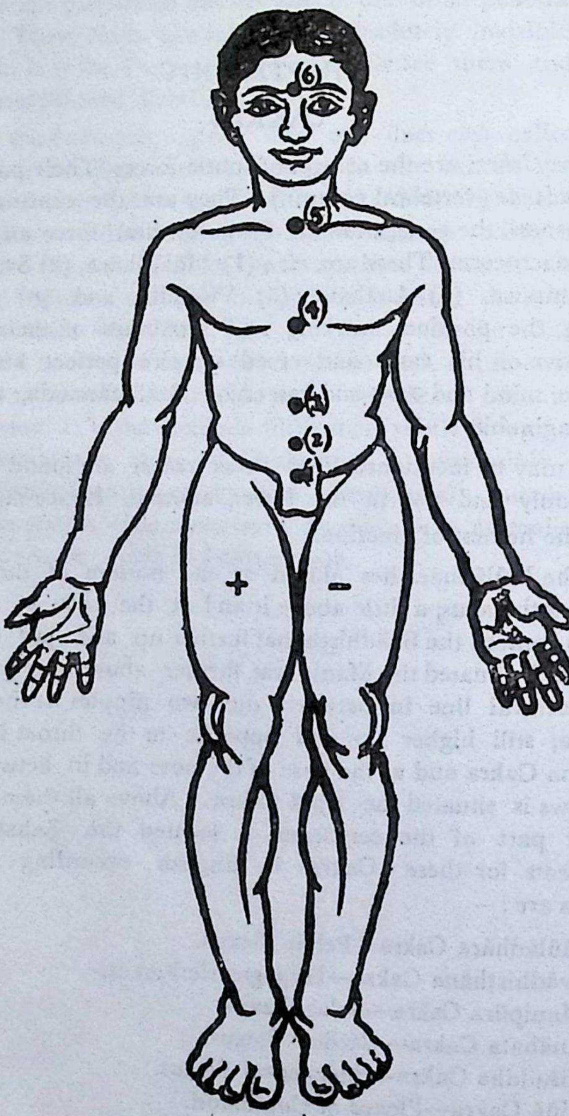
The *Cakras* are the centres of subtle forces. Their position is on the *Merudaṇḍa* (vertebral column). They are the centres of cosmic consciousness, the generation of Prāṇa or vital force and openings on the macrocosm. These are, *viz.*, (1) Mūlādhāra, (2) Svadhiṣṭhāna, (3) Maṇipūra, (4) Anāhata, (5) Viśuddha and (6) Ājñā. One knowing the position, working and attributes of these *cakras* can irrespective of his caste and creed acquire perfect knowledge of physique, mind and *ātmā* and can enjoy Brahmānanda, the highest bliss imaginable.

It may be mentioned that these *cakras* are found in human beings only and not in the lower animals. Hence man has been called the highest of creation.

The Mūlādhāra lies almost at the bottom of the backbone adjoining the anus; a little above it and at the root of the genital organ is located the Svādhiṣṭhāna; further up and just opposite to the navel is situated the Maṇipūra; further above and just opposite to the central line in between the two nipples is the seat of the Anāhata; still higher up and opposite to the throat is seated the Viśuddha Cakra and at the base of the nose and in between the two eye-brows is situated the Ājñā Cakra. Above all these and in the topmost part of the cerebrum is located the Sahasrāra. The equivalents for these Cakras in English according to modern scholars are :—

Mūlādhāra Cakra—Pelvic Plexus.
Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra—Hypogastric Plexus.
Maṇipūra Cakra—Solar Plexus.
Anāhata Cakra—Cardiac Plexus.
Viśuddha Cakra—Pharyngeal Plexus.
Ājñā Cakra—Plexus of Command.
Sahasrāra Cakra—Cerebrum, the Plexus of nerves of one thousend branches.

It may be stated here that the Cakras referred to above are quite different from glands which form an interesting subject of study for endocrinologists. For example, penial gland lies behind



Position of the Cakras or Vital centres (I) Mūlādhāra (2) Svādhiṣṭhāna (3) Maṇipūra (4) Anāhata (5) Viśuddha (6) Ājñā

third ventricle of brain; pituitary gland secrets phlegm; thyroid gland is situated on the larynx and traches; pancreatic gland, located near stomach, discharges a digestive secretion into the duodenum; suprarenal gland lies above the kidney; and so on.

The Mūlādhāra Cakra is a four-petalled lotus and it is realised when the devotee can conquer *pṛthvī tattva, i.e.,* when he rises above the influences of material objects. Similarly, Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra, Maṇipūra, Cakra, Anāhata Cakra and Viśudda Cakra (six-petalled, tenpetalled, twelve-petalled and sixteen-petalled lotuses respectively) are visible with the conquest of other four elements, *viz.*, water, heat, air and space.

The following account of the origin of the Cakras in consonance with the cosmic creation, their actions and functions is taken from *The Man and his Religion* by S. C. Chakravarty. The author says, "Brahman is attributeless. His desire for creation is Mayic Prakṛti. This Prakṛti or the active principle of creation contains within it the three Guṇas—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. When these three Guṇas remain in a state of equilibrium, all creation ceases. When desire, which is the essence of Prakṛti, is given scope for play, the three Guṇas become diversified and the material world begins to take shape gradually. The first creation is Mahat-tattva, also called Hiraṇyagarbha or Brahma. From Mahat-tattva proceeds *Ahaṅkāra* or Egoism; from Ahaṅkāra originate the eleven senses and five tattvas and from five tattvas the five elements called Pañca-bhūtas take their birth; and lastly, when the different atoms of five elements begin to conglomerate together in different and manifold proportions, according to the actions of the three Guṇas mentioned above, the creation with the multifarious objects begins to crop up. That is the outer world called Brahmāṇḍa (macrocosm) in respect to our physical body called Khaṇḍa Deha (microcosm). One is a perfect replica of the other. The Oṁkāra which is the only object of worship according to the Vedas represents the intire creation of the microcosm and the macrocosm alike. This Om is a symbol of the seven tattvas located in the seven cakras on the Suṣumnā line inside the backbone. The Om represents different stages of creation from the subtlest to the grossest. The seven are A,U,M, Nāda, Bindu Kāla and *Kālātita*. The A of Om is Prithvītattva and its seat is in the Mūlādhāra Cakra and it is identical with Brahma—the creative principle of the universe; the U of Om is Jalatattva and its seat is in the Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra and it is identical with

Viṣṇu—the sustaining principle of the universe; the M of Om is Teja-tattva and its seat is in Maṇipūra Cakra and it is identical with Rudra—the destructive principle of the universe; the Nāda of Om is vāyu-tattva and its seat is in the Anāhata Cakra and it is identical with Īśvara; the Bindu of Om is Ākāśa-tattva and its seat is in the Viśuddha Cakra and it is identical with Maheśvara; the Kāla of Om is Ājñā Cakra and it is identical with *Para-śiva* and Kālātīta of Om is the Sahasrāra and it is identical with *Para Brahma.* The seven Cakras mentioned here are the seven stages of realisation of the all-embracing Om. The object of realisation of the Mūlādhāra Cakra is the awakening of the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti and the means thereto is *Mantra-yoga.* The object of realisation of the Svādhiṣṭhāna is *Nārāyaṇa* and the means thereto is *Mantra-yoga* and *Haṭha-yoga.* The object of the Maṇipūra Cakra is *Kāla* (Eternal time) and the means thereto is *Dhyāna* (concentration); the object of realisation of Anāhata Cakra is *Vijñāna* (knowledge supermundane) and the means thereto is *Jñāna-yoga* or *Hṛdaya-granthiveda*; the object of realisation of Viśuddha Cakra is total vacancy or Ākāśa and the means thereto is *Parayoga Sannyāsa* (absolute indifference); the object of realisation of Ājñā Cakra is Brahma and the means thereto is *Sambhavi-yoga*; and the object of realisation of Sahasrāra is Para-Brahma and the means thereto is *Sahaja-yoga* Mokṣa-Sādhana.

"These are the seven unavoidable stages of realisation. The material or the instruments with the help of which these different stages are to be realised are also different. For the realisation of the Pṛthvitattva (Mūlādhāra) we have to take recourse to our nose. *i.e.*. inhalation and exhalation. Till the breath is brought absolutely under control, the *Kula-kuṇḍalinī Śakti* is not realised. For the realisation of Jalatattva (Svādhiṣṭhāna) we have to take the help of our tongue, *i.e.*, we have to bring the tongue under control in such a way (by adopting particular method which has to be learnt directly from the Guru that the mind can think of no other thing except God and the tongue can utter no word which has no reference to the glories of God. For the relation of teja-tattva (Maṇipūra) we have to take the help of our eyes, *i.e.*, we have to control the movement of the eyes in such a way that they do not deflect even for a moment from our centre located between the two eye-brows. For the realisation of Vāyu-tattva (Anāhata) we have got to bring our skin (*i.e.*, power of perception) under control and this has to be done by means of a particular practice which is called Kumbhaka. For the realisation of Ākāśatattva (Viśuddha) we have got to use our ears as our means or instrument in such a way that the multifarious sounds of the world cannot distract us and we get accustomed to hear only one sound, which may be either *Nāda* or any name of God to which the aspirant is used to. For the realisation of Ajñā or Prajñā *Cakra* we have to take shelter with our life-breath, *i.e*, we have to control our mind in such a way that it always remains fixed on the incoming and outgoing flow of breath. This is called *Prāṇa-Kriyā*.

"The realisation of Sahasrāra is Samādhi, *i.e.*, reunion of the individual soul with the Universal soul. The previous stages having been realised, this last stage comes as a matter of course, if only one can steadfastly stick to the Ājñā Cakra and this is called *Śāmbhavī-Mudrā*.

"So the quest after God-realisation, if it is at all sincere, mus be in the ascending line from the grossest to the subtlest as the descent has been just in the reverse-order in the same line. The upward rise from the line or process is hard and adamantine and therefore unalterable. Mūlādhāra up to the Sahasrāra divulges the mystery of creation and is the only course which makes Non-realisation possible. Not only *Yogins* have to follow this course, but the pursuers of Jñāna-Mārga and Bhakti-Marga have also to travel the same.

"In order to attain Jīvanmukti, one has to rise up to the Sahasrāra through the Suṣumnā vein after controlling the activities of all other numerous nerves and veins of the body by controlling the breath. This is also called the awakening of *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*, *i.e.*, the force which is the origin of diversities in creation and is also at the same time the sustainer of all created things. Till *Kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, which has its seat in the Mūlādhāra Cakra, it is to be known that the attempts for reaching the true and only path of self-realisation, has not yet been achieved. The *Kuṇḍalinī* is a tangible and living symbol of the divine force by taking resources to which the Para-Brahma has manifested himself in this created sphere. Without Prāṇāyāma or total control over breath, by whatever means be it effected (by meditation or devotion), the awakening of the *Kuṇḍalinī* is absolutely impossible. It is Prāṇāyāma which gradually leads us to the three other higher stages called Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna and really it is only in the stage of Dhyāna that the Kuṇḍalinī becomes visible as a burning electrified slender straight line inside the backbone. It is this force which inheres in every created object and sustains it. Its activities are constant but are not ordinarily perceived by human beings. So it is said that this Kuṇḍalinī lies in a dormant sleeping state like a serpent folding itself in three and half coils, just as any ordinary serpent does while in the hole, particularly during the winter season. It is at the root of very existence, and so we have it in ordinary parlance that the earth rests on the head of Vāsuki (the king of serpents). Its seat is just below the Mūlādhāra and in the dormant state it is said to keep its hood directed downwards. With the conquest of the Mūlādhāra or Pṛthvītattva (*i.e.* the influence of the objective world upon our senses), the hood is raised upwards and simultaneously a hissing sound is heard within, which is सोऽहं (I am He)—the opposite of हंस (the ordinary mild sound of the breath)."

It may be mentioned here that knowledge of the Cakras is esssential for the attainment of occult powers. While dwelling on this subject that learned author writes as follows :—

"When the *Kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, the Yogins begin to acquire the eight-fold attainments called अष्टसिद्धि (Aṣṭasiddhi). These are (1) अणिमा (Aṇimā), *i.e.*, the power of making one's body as minute as an atom; (2) गरिमा (Garimā) *i.e.*, the power of increasing the weight of one's body to abnormal limits; (3) महिमा (Mahimā), *i.e.*, the power of increasing the size of one's body at will; (4) लघिमा (Laghimā), *i.e.*, the power of making the body exceedingly light; (5) ईशित्व (Īśitva), *i.e.*, the power of creating things according to one's desire; (6) वशित्व (Vaśitva), *i.e.*, the power of winning or hypnotising others; (7) प्राप्ति (Prāpti), *i.e.*, occasional God-realisation and (8) प्रत्यक्ष (Pratyakṣa), *i.e.*, God-vision at desire. These powers are automatically acquired by all good souls who can systematically concentrate on the life-force or Ātman. The acquisition of these powers often operates as a great stumbling block in the path of self or God-realisation, particularly when they are employed for personal glorification in any way. So the experienced Seers say that they have to be very carefully guarded against.

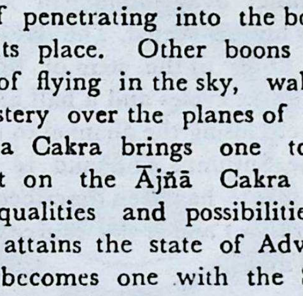
The following particulars regarding the attainment of occult powers are compiled from various Tantras :—

Each Cakra has a subtle force peculiar to it as well as the sensation caused by its activity. Each has its particular presiding Deity. These Deities are not only symbolic, but the Tantrics actually see them during their meditation and these act as insignia to the Tantric scholars by which they can judge the progress of their psychic development.

The *Saṭcakra-nirūpaṇa* enumerates the qualities acquired by concentration upon each of the six centres and indirectly by the passing of the Divine force the Kuṇḍalinī, through them The meditation on the Mūlādhāra Cakra leads to the mastery of the Yogi's enemies, namely, his passions and selfishness. The passions are luxury, anger, greediness, deception, pride and envy which all proceed from Ahaṅkāra. Meditation on Svādhiṣṭhāna brings victory over the physical elements; that on Maṇipūra leads to the mastery of the subtle elements; that on the Anāhata leads to the mastery of sound. The Tantric student acquires the faculty of penetrating into the body of a dead man and animating it in its place. Other boons are the power of becoming invisible, of flying in the sky, walking on water etc., that is to say the mastery over the planes of creation. Meditation on the Viśuddha Cakra brings one to the threshold of great liberation; that on the Ājñā Cakra is the way to the development of the qualities and possibilities of the preceding Cakra. The disciple attains the state of Advaita-vādi when he sees no duality. He becomes one with the Supreme Soul. He becomes the witness of the universe.

The following descriptions of the Cakras are taken from various Tantric texts :—

Mūlādhāra—This lotus contains four petals on which occur



Mūlādhāra Cakra

the four letters, *viz.*, व, श, ष, स, of the Sanskrit alphabets. In the ovule of the lotus, Brahmā accompanied by Dākinī Śakti is seated on the bīja लं in a rectangular yellowish region of pṛthvī This cakra exercises considerable influence on rectum, kidney, accumulation of sperm and the sexual organ and also on bones, skin, flesh, nerve and hairs. It has also much connection with the smelling power. Actually bīja लं is the sound that emits while the current causing the sensation of smell flows. Bereft of Tantric technology this means that the devotee should consider himself above the influence of the material bodies and endowed with the creative energy of Brahma. Further details are available on this cakra. Within this rectangle is a blood-red triangular zone of fire where blows Kandarpa vāyu which is the cause of sexual excitement, so essential for the functioning of procreation. By its vibrations it brings about expansion and contraction of the lungs, essential for breathing. Svayambhuliṅga Mahādeva with his face turned backwards is himself seated. The Kulakuṇḍalini Śakti which is subtler than the fibres of the stem of the lotus surrounds this Svayambhuliṅga in three cycles and a half and like a black cobra is sleeping soundly after closing the channel to the Brahma Nāḍī which is situated within the Suṣumnā line and is the only way to God-vision. This Mahā Śakti has been described in the Śāstras as the Mūla Mantra or Sarasvatī and is the source of the three *guṇas, viz.*, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

When a yogi meditates upon Svayambhuliṅga Mahādeva at this cakra, he soon gets free from sins and the Kulakuṇḍalinī Śakti is awakened by uttering the Mūla Mantra with a placid mind and devotion. The mouth of the Kuṇḍalinī is considered to be at the confluence of Suṣumnā (life-current), Vajra Nāḍī (electric current and Brahma Nāḍī (sound current or spirit current). What is meant by the awakening of the Kulakuṇḍalinī has been explained earlier.

It may be added here for the edification of the Sādhaka that this cakra is situated at the extreme end of the backbone which is the confluence of the three Nāḍīs, *viz.*, Iḍā, Piṅgalā and Suṣumnā.

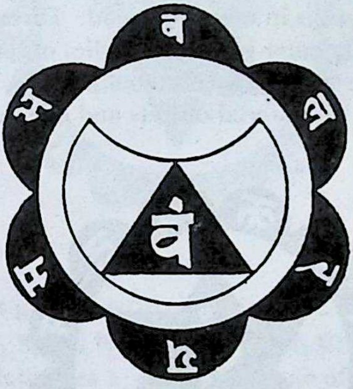
The Sādhaka has to leave both the Iḍā and the Piṅgalā Nāḍīs and to follow the Suṣumnā Nāḍī. When this is achieved the breathing is done in a rhythmical way, both the noses inhale air and exhale air together in a slow way. Inhalation is neither by the right nose nor by the left nose. Inside the Suṣumnā Nāḍī flows a finer nerve-current or

Nāḍī called Vajra Nāḍī and inside the latter is encased the Citra Nāḍī which again contains within it the Brahma Nāḍī, which the devotee has been advised to see.

Svādhiṣṭhāna—This cakra has six petals with the letters ब, भ, म, य, र, ल The ovule of this lotus is red in colour. Inside this, there is a circular region of primordial liquid where in a convex *yantra* on the Varuṇa Bīja वं is seated Nārāyaṇa with the blue-coloured Rākiṇī Śakti.

The six petals represent six principal nerves upon the large intestines, rectum, kidney, bladder, sexual organ and the testes. The circulation of the fluid substances in the body, their preservation and sustenance is helped by it.

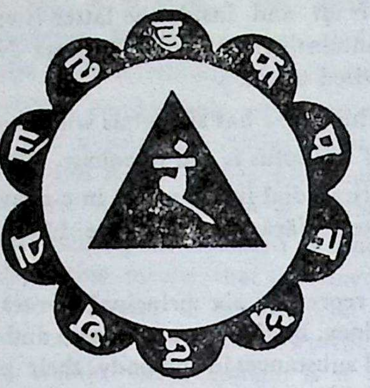
This cakra is also the centre of heterosexual attachment.



Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra

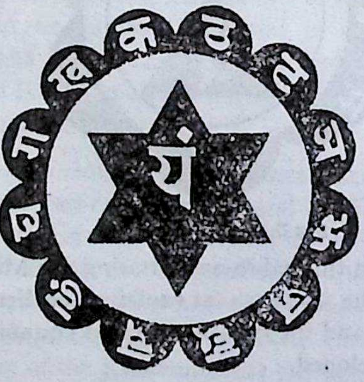
By meditating on this cakra and uttering the Mūla Mantra the devotee can conquer the *jalatattva*, as explained earlier. He is relieved from egoistic feelings, and the qualities such as equanimity, placidity of mind, etc , are developed.

Maṇipūra—This Cakra contains ten letters ड, ढ, ण, त, थ, द, ध, न, प, फ in its ten petals. Within the ovule of this lotus there is a triangular region of Fire wherein on the Agni Bīja रं is seated the Mahākāla with the darkcoloured Lākinī Śakti clothed in a yellow cloth. This cakra is concerned with the functioning of the stomach, lever, large intestines, etc. It regulates the flow of heat in the body and helps digestion. The digestive power of man is increased by meditating on the red colour in this cakra.



Maṇipūra Cakra

A yogī meditating on this cakra and uttering Mūla Mantra at this centre remains always in a happy mood. Diseases cannot enter his body. He can easily enter into the bodies of others and can see the Siddhas who are spiritually elevated persons. He can know at sight the qualities of the material objects and can even see the articles within the earth.

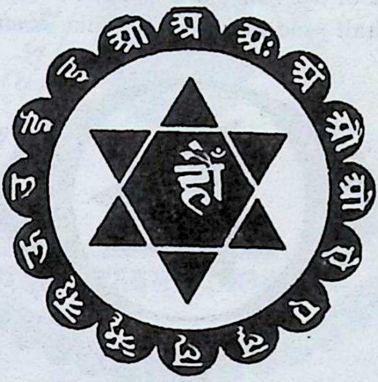


Anāhata Cakra

Anāhata—This cakra contains twelve letters, bright like vermillion, *viz*., क, ख, ग, घ, ङ, च, छ, ज, झ, ञ, ट, ठ, in its twelve petals. In the ovule of this lotus is a region of Air which is of the shape of a Ṣaṭkoṇa, *i. e* , a figure of six angular points made by the telescoping of one triangle within another triangle. Here on the Vāyu Bīja यं is seated the bright gold-coloured Īśāna with lightning-coloured Kākiṇī Śakti with three eyes, clothed in a yellow attire, adorned with all sorts of ornaments and bestowing boons and fearlessness. She drinks the nectar that flows from the Sahasrāra to the Mūlādhāra.

There is another triangular region at the very centre of this cakra. It is very tender to touch. Within it is Bāṇaliṅga Śiva of the complexion of bright gold, having a minute hole on his head.

A yogi uttering Mūla Mantra at this cakra becomes fit for realisation of God. He becomes capable of controlling his senses, by restricting the sensation of touch inherent in this cakra, which is at the root of all perceptions by senses. No desire remains unfulfilled in him. He remains always in a state of bliss.



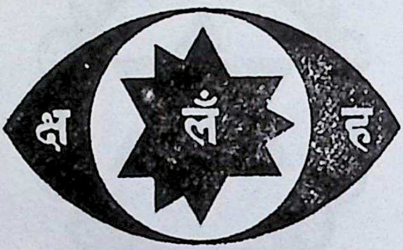
Viśuddha Cakra

Viśuddha—This greyish lotus contains the sixteen vowels, *viz.*, अ, आ, इ, ई, उ, ऊ, ऋ, ॠ, लृ, लॄ, ए, ऐ, ओ, औ, अं, अः in its sixteen petals. In the ovule of this lotus lies a spherical zone of Ākāśa wherein on the Ākāśa Bīja हं is seated the Ardhanārīśvara (Half-male and half-female) Śiva on a white elephant and he is accompanied by the yellow-coloured Śākinī Śakti with four hands.

A yogī uttering Mūla Mantra here can gain the highest prominence on earth. While meditating on this centre the yogī should think of it as white ākāśa or as Śiva of snow-white complexion in the company of Haimavatī of yellow complexion. The sphere of ākāśa expands more and more on concentration. This yogī understands the true nature of things. In his heart are unfolded the secrets of the Vedas.

Ājñā* *Cakra—The cakra is otherwise called *dvidala*, on account of its being the origin of two nervous flows, one through the eyes and other through the medulla spinolis. According to the medical science it is called the mid-brain. The petals of this lotus are red in colour and contain the letters हं and क्षं, the first of which is composed of *sattva* and *rajas* and the second of *tamas*. In the stem of this lotus there is a *yantra* with nine angular points wherein on the लं Bīja, the Bīja of destruction and command, is the Para Śiva with the white-coloured Hākinī Śakti with four hands and six mouths. The three Nāḍīs, *viz.*, Suṣumnā, Iḍā and Piṅgalā after following different courses from Mūlādhāra again meet here.

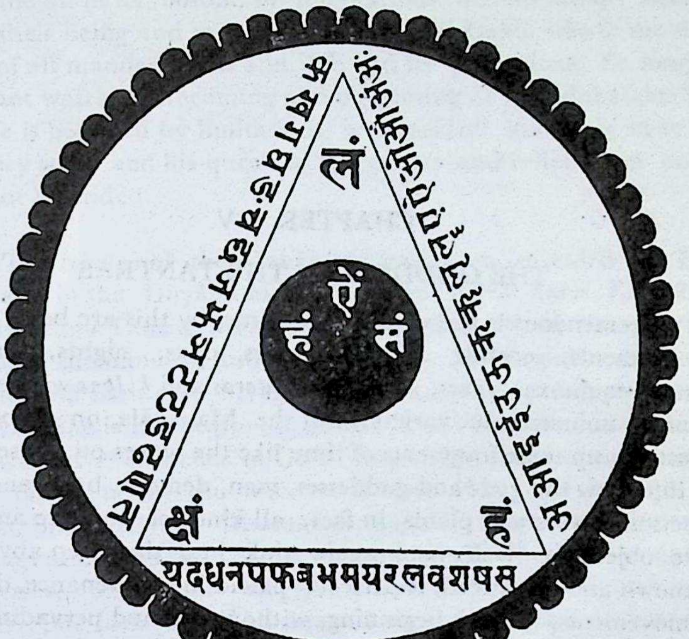
In the middle of the cakra is a *maṇḍala* (circlet) of pure intellect. Above this is half moon and a point-like *bindu* over the same.



Ājñā Cakra

One meditating on this centre has vision of the highest truth and acquires yogic powers. By being practised in the meditation of ākāśa, the yogī is relieved of all *saṁskāras* of virtue and sin and ultimately gains *ātma-jñāna*, the highest knowledge.

Sahasrāra—In the centre of the head lies the Sahasrāra which is a lotus resplendent as the morning sun-rays and looking downwards. It has thousand petals of which the most prominent are fifty, containing all the fifty letters, described in the cakras. Mūlādhāra to Ājñā cakra. In the spherical ovule of this lotus is a triangular space along which are arranged the letters as shown in the figure. Around the *yantra* is the ocean of nectar. This triangular *yantra* is also called Maṇidvīpa. Above the Nāda and Bindu of this *yantra* is a *pīṭha* (a place) of हंस on which sits Paramabrahma represented by the ग्रौं Bīja, the Bīja of consciousness which is another name of Sat, Cit and Ānanda. In Tantric language the ग्रौं Bīja is known as Guru Pādukā, *i.e.*, the foot stamp of the Guru. By meditating on the lotus-foot of Guru the devotee can easily cross this terrible ocean of creation, preservation and destruction and can taste the nectar that flows in constant stream


लं
ऐं
हं
सं
क्षं
हं
यदधनपफबभमयरलवशषस

Sahasrāra

from that Sahasrāra. He gains emancipation. Nothing on earth can bind him. All sorts of yogic powers dwell in him. All his Karma Saṁskāras being destroyed, he is subject neither to birth nor to death.

CHAPTER XV

THE GODDESS OF THE TANTRAS

Tremendous is the wheeling of Time; by this are being created the moments, seconds, minutes, hours, days, nights, fortnights, months, equinoxes, years, *yugas*, *manvantaras* and *kalpas* with ever new events as numerous in variety. But the Mahākāla, on whose broad breast rise up these fragments of time like the waves on the sea bringing into view the gods and goddesses, men, demons, birds and beasts, insects and trees and plants, in fact, all kinds of animate and inanimate objects as well—and again sink into the deep abyss quite unknown and unnoticed, is perfectly placid in countenance, devoid of all movements, without beginning, without end and pervading everything without break.

Man is overwhelmed with the glories of the manifested world and the various sensations that proceed from it. But the shadow of Death is lurking everywhere. While man is struting about puffed with *ahaṁkāra* and engrossed with his own enjoyments, Death opens his fearful mouth from all quarters and is slowly and yet surely devouring his belongings one by one and even his own self. The eternal problem of man is how to get out of the coils of mortality that bind him so fast on all sides.

Philosophy is silent here. Its gaze cannot penetrate behind the deep dark curtain of Death. It is Tantra which illumines this tragic void and shows the path to immorality to the distracted and perplexed humanity. Its great message rings solemnly in the midst of veritable ignorance that engulfs the world today. Its message is this. If you hanker after immortality and intensely desire to be saved once for all from the depredations of time, then do not be overwhelmed with the sensations received from the objective world which assumes new shapes and figures every moment of your life with the rolling of time. Keep your mental eyes ever rivetted at the lotus-feet of the Mahāśakti who activates the Mahākāla lying at Her feet. Just as the scintillating outburst of a fire-work derives its very existence and glitter from the gun-powder within it or just as a lamp draws its light from the oil in its bosom, so the various manifestations around us have their being and movement in this Mahāśakti who is the neutral zone of all manifestations and life and its possessions. So long man does not watch the incoming and outcoming of this Mahāśakti in life, his life is bounded by limitations, is imperfect and subject to death at every step, and his quest for happiness and relief from bondage will not be ended.

The *svarūpa* of the Mahāśakti has been revealed in Tantric texts and in the Dhyāna mantras of the Ādyā Śakti Kālikā. The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra says on this point that she is the great progenitor of the minutest and biggest things in the universe—both the animate and inanimate beings. This universe is begotten of Her free will. She is the beginning of all. The Vidyās and the Trinity—all owe their existence to Her. She is cognisant of the entire universe but none in the universe knows Her. She is Kālī, Tārā, Ṣoḍaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Dhūmavatī, Bagalā, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Mātaṅgī and Kamalā. She is surrounded on all sides by gods and goddesses. She is at the same time the grossest and subtlest matter. She is devoid of all dimensions and yet takes various forms. For the fulfilment of desires of the Sādhakas, She assumes various forms. She appears at times to destroy the Asuras and assumes four hands and occasionally two, six, eight, ten or thousand hands. She wears various weapons for the maintenance of Her world. She is the great Mother who being propitiated all gods and goddesses are propitiated. She is Ānanda itself. It is a State of eternal bliss which cannot be conceived by mind or words. When Para Brahma or Mahākāla is desirous of creating the universe, the objective world emerges from Him through the seven centres of realisation or cakras. He is ever-existence, pervades all and resides in all after emcompassing them. He is unchanging in all forms, unattached and is the conscious element. He does not eat, does not move, does not smell. though it is through His instrumentality that Prakṛti is in action, the eyes see, the ear hears, the nose smells, the mind works and so on. He is the Śivatattva as mentioned in the Ācamana Mantra which is to be uttered by the Tantric worshipper in commencing his daily worship, just after Ātmatattva which refers to the individual souls experiencing duality. Mahāśakti is a Mahāyoginī connecting the links of creation, preservation and destruction and at the will of Mahākāla She creates the universe, preserves it and destroys it with all its animate and inanimate objects. The destructive force is one of Her aspects. As she destroys Mahākāla at the time of *Pralaya*, She is called Kālī. She is worshipped as Ādyā, as She is beginning of all. After *mahāpralaya* She alone remains as Tama or Avyakta Prakṛti in a state inconceivable by words or mind. Though formless She assumes various forms ; though without beginning She is the origin of all. She is the Great Creator, Protector and Destroyer and Commander of all.

The Dhyāna mantras which are many are unanimous in describing Her as in a state of eternal bliss and playing in the bosom of Śiva. Her feet do not rest on anything except the breast of Śiva. She resides in the cremation ground—where all the worldly objects are being reduced to ashes—their seed stage. By her independent will she begets the universe with all its diversifications, and again sucks them to Her breast in the twinkling of an eye. Unobstructed is Her motion and multifarious is Her disport. She is black in colour which means that all contradictions like black and white, cold and heat, possible, and impossible, birth and death merge at Her feet. Yet there is an unsurpassed hallow about Her that does not dazzle the eyes, rather She appears as cool and appealing as the light of million moons brought together. She is ridden on a corpse (*i.e.*, exists in all inanimate objects) and is yet *mahābhīmā* (*i.e.*, unattached as the sky and the abode of all energy). She has got terrible teeth, yet she is conferring boons to all. She is open-mouthed and yet most affectionate to Her children, bearing as She does in Her bosom all their belongings—physical, mental and spiritual. She has a laughing attitude, yet engrossed in wielding the terrible Spirit of Time. She possesses three eyes with which She can peep through the immeasurable Present, Past and Future. She carries in one of Her hands a skull which is the receptacle of the Unseen and the seeds of the universe. She bears in another hand a cutting instrument which breaks the seeds and puts them in full bloom in the form of the universe. Her hair is dishevelled, *i.e.*, She is beyond all bondage and Her outspreading tongue lusciously sucks the blood coming out of the either corner of her fearful mouth. She wears a necklace of letters which are no other than the Mātrikā Śaktis which constitute the universe and give it a shape. She is also described as being in a destructive mood standing on the bosom of Śiva with a garland of severed hands around Her girdle in a cremation ground resounding with the howling of jackals and yet She wears in Her neck the heads of all She destroys in the shape of a garland. She is neither the knower nor the non-knower. She is Ānandamayī where both positivity and negativity meet.

Such is the Goddess the Tantras have revealed to the world. She is to be worshipped by all seeking perfect self-abnegation, though She in her immense mercy showers the highest benedictions on the worshippers. To attain this the devotee must be free from all passions, fear, anger, and indifferent to pleasure and pain, gain and loss, respect and insult and must reach a stage of self-realisation where he can exclaim in wonder शिवोऽहम् (I am identifiable with Śiva). It is thus the Tantras uphold the highest teachings of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads and yet bring us face to face with our Creator (Mahākālī), Preserver (Mahālakṣmī) and Destroyer (Mahāsarasvatī) who are but the different aspects of Ānandamayī Kālikā. The Goddess Mahākālī is the direct cause of the objective world and is essentially the creative principle. The Goddess Mahālakṣmī is directly responsible for the sensations and feelings that play in the heart of all and is the preserving and sustaining principle while the Goddess Mahāsarasvatī converts the feelings to *saṁskāras* or experiences in the shape of letters or words, and all thoughts and desires which arising in our heart move us to action proceed from Her in never-ending cycles. The Goddess Kālikā, or Ānandamayī as She has been called, residing in the heart of Mahākāla (the Eternal Time), at her independent will appears as Mahākāli, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī to fulfil Her sport of Creation, Preservation and Destruction. She herself becomes these Goddesses and absorbs them in Her at the time of universal dissolution. She is Herself the Maker of the universe and its constituent. There is nothing outside Her. She is the Brahma of the Upaniṣads and yet established in Her own glory. She is therefore worshipped in both aspects, *viz.*, as the bestower of all possessions of life and also as the mighty Śakti that gives us *Kaivalya, i.e.*, oneness with Brahma. Our obeisance to Her, the Embodiment of Rasa !

CHAPTER XVI

THE TEN MAHĀVIDYĀS

The most important goddesses of the Tantra are the ten Mahāvidyās, *viz.*, Kālī, Tārā, Ṣoḍaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Dhūmavatī, Bagalā, Mātaṅgī and Kamalā. They are worshipped by the Tantrics for the sake of various spiritual attainments. They are, in fact, the manifestations of Śakti or the Great Mother in the process of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. It is said that on the eve of sacrifice to be performed by Dakṣa, mention of which has been made in an earlier chapter, Satī his daughter, married Śiva dwelling on the summits of Kailāsa, expressed a desire to her consort to attend the sacrifice, though uninvited. Śiva advised her not to go there under the circumstances. But all remonstrances failed to persuade her to stay in Kailāsa. When she saw that even all her entreaties did not move Śiva, she assumed the dreadful figure of goddes Kālī. Śiva was greatly frightened. He tried to escape from her in fear and whichever direction he turned, he found his way blocked by the goddesses of unknown forms and appearances inspiring fear. Overcome with apprehension Śiva searched for Sati, his consort. Then the goddess Kālī addressing Śiva in a soft tone said, "Mahādeva, how could you forget that I am your mother, as well that of Viṣṇu and Brahmā ? While you were lying in the Kāraṇa-Śarīra (the primordial water in which the cosmic egg is laid), it was at my will that you became engaged in deep meditation as regards the creation of the universe. Then I, assuming the appearance of a corpse went floating to all of you one by one. Viṣṇu, unable to bear the foul smell of the corpse, hastily left the place ; Brahmā also turned his face to the four cardinal points in disgust. It was only you that instead of expressing any hateful attitude at my sight, took the corpse in your breast. Then pleased with you I, as Prakṛti, chose you as the Puruṣa. In this way we two have come together as Śiva and Śakti." Hearing this, Mahādeva was relieved of all fears, and Mahāmāyā withdrew the ten goddesses who are known by the name of Mahāvidyās or Siddhavidyās. Needless to say that after this Śiva did not prevent Satī from proceeding to her father's sacrifice.

We have already discussed the chief of the Mahāvidyās, *viz.*, Kālī. We, therefore, give below a short account of the other Mahāvidyās, in the order they are mentioned in the Tantras.

Tārā—Tārā is of dark blue complexion whereas Kālī, already mentioned, is of dark colour, as sombre as the clouds at the time of universal dissolution. Tārā places her left leg on the breast of Śiva, who lies like a corpse. She is of short stature with a protruding bell. She has a terrible appearance and she is dressed in tiger-skin. She wears on her neck a garland of severed human heads. She is in the prime of her youth and adorned with *Pañcamudrās*. She is possessed of four hands and her tongue is held out a bit. She wears a single braid of matted hair on her head. The Ṛṣi Akṣobhya resides in her forehead. Her complexion is as effulgent as that of the newly rising sun. She is three-eyed. She stands in the midst of a funeral pyre. The range of her teeth is terrible. She is laughing, engrossed in her emotion, and she is decked with ornaments worn by the women. She takes her stand on a white lotus in the midst of a wide expanse of water.

Ṣoḍaśī—She is the third Mahāvidyā and is as resplendent as the newly rising sun. She is also three-eyed. She holds in her four hands noose, goad, arrow and bow. She is seated on a pedestal comprising of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśvara (Indra) and Sadāśiva and the altar on which she takes her seat is Śiva himself. On the altar is Mahākāla with whom the Mahāvidyā sports in joy.

Bhuvaneśvarī—Her complexion is that of the risen sun. She possesses a crescent on her forehead and a crown over her head. Her breasts are full and surcharged with milk. She is three-eyed and her face is ever lit up with smile. In her two hands she holds the noose and the goad and in the other two the pose of granting boons and assurances to her devotees.

Bhairavī—The fifth Mahāvidyā Bhairavī is reddish like the morning sun. She is dressed in a silken cloth and wears a garland of heads on her neck. Her breast is anointed with gore. In her four hands she holds a rosary of beads, a book, and the poses of granting boons and assurances. She has a crescent on her forehead. Her three eyes are as beautiful as red lotuses. There is a bejewelled crown over her head. A mild smile plays on her lips.

Chinnamastā—The Sādhaka should concentrate his mind on a pure and fully blown lotus in the region of the navel. Within it is the solar region red as hibiscus and surrounded by three lines, *viz*, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Within that region is the Goddess Chinnamastā who is also effulgent as tens of millions of suns together. Her mouth is expansive, terrible to look at, with tongue emitting out. The Goddess is drinking the blood that gushes forth from her throats. Her hair is dishevelled and beautified with many varieties of flowers. In her right hand she holds a cutting instrument and wears a garland of human heads on her neck. She is naked and of fearful appearance. Her right leg is in front while her left leg is a little behind. The Goddess Chinnamastā wears a garland of bones and a serpent in the shape of a sacred thread. She is on a standing posture of Rati and Kāma who are in the attitude of sexual embrace. Her appearance is that of a woman of sixteen years with heavy and rising breasts. On the left and right hand side of the Goddess are two *nāyikās* called *Ḍākinī* and *Varṇinī*. The Varṇinī on the right hand side of the Goddess is red in complexion, naked and with dishevelled hair. In her left hand is the severed head of a man, in her right hand a cutter, and she wears a sacrificial thread made of serpent. She is of a glowing splendour. Her right leg is in front and her left leg, a little behind. She is also of sixteen years of age and bedecked with various ornaments, and a garland of bones. The effulgence of Ḍākinī on the left side of the goddess is like that of the sun at the termination of the Kalpa, resplendent like fire, and her matted hairs sparkle like lightning. This Ḍākinī is of three eyes, her rows of teeth are white, face looks terrible in view of her frightful teeth and her breasts are heavy and prominent. This Ḍākinī is of very fearful countenance, of dishevelled hair and naked. Her protruding tongue is big. She puts on a garland of human heads on her neck, and holds a human skull in her lefr hand and a cutter in her right hand. She also quaffs the blood gushing out in another stream from the neck of the Goddess. Both Varṇinī and Ḍākinī are serving the Goddess.

Dhūmavatī—Dhūmavatī is pale in complexion, is ever moving, stern and of tall stature. Her cloth is also dirty, her hair is disorderly and colourless, she is without teeth and her breasts are hanging. She is in the garb of a widow and rides a chariot over which sits a crow. Her two eyes are stern without sight of tenderness. In one of her hands she has a winnowing fan and her other hand is in the attitude of granting boons. Her nose is big, and the body and eye crooked. She is afflicted with hunger and thirst, of terrible mien and of quarrelsome nature.

Bagalā—The Goddess Bagalā is seated on a throne placed on an altar beset with gems in a *maṇḍapa* be-spangled with gems in the midst of an ocean of nectar. She is of yellow countenance and puts on a yellow-coloured cloth. She is adorned all over with garlands and ornaments. She holds in one of her hands a mace and in the other the tongue of enemy. The Goddess holding the tip of the tongue of the enemy in her left hand, belabours him with a mace taken up in her right hand. She has two hands and is covered all over in yellow.

Mātaṇgī—The Goddess is of dark complexion, with a crescent on her forehead, and has three eyes. In her four hands she holds the sword, *Kheṭaka*, noose and goad. The Goddess is seated on a throne made of precious stones.

Kamalā—The complexion of the Goddess is as bright as gold. Four elephants resembling four hillocks of gold are coronating the Goddess by holding four pitchers containing nectar with their trunks. In her four hands she holds two lotuses and shows postures of granting boons and assurances. Her head is decked with begemmed crown. She wears a silk cloth and is seated on a lotus.

The ten Mahāvidyās represent the *seven* stages in which Śakti manifests herself and the *three* stages in which she withdraws creation in Herself. The descriptions given above are in cryptic language and do not seem to be of much significance to the common people. We have already explained what is meant by certain terms in a previous section. Studied in that light, the above descriptions will offer much valuable hints on spiritual matters. Our ideas, conceptions and perceptions are always undergoing changes. Is there no law in the formation and dissolution of these ideas ? The Tantras offer a new illumination on this abstruse matter. With the help of the ten Mahavidyās, they show that it is consciousness that holds our actions and directs them in accordance with our feelings and realisations. When one understands these ten classifications of Śakti, it becomes easy for him to see that pure consciousness governs all objects, whether animate or inanimate.

Kālı is pure ecstacy, a feeling of perfect satisfaction. There is no question of such a thing that this much I have got and this much I require. She is above all senses of positivity and negativity. When She first awakens with the sense of positivity, She becomes

Tārā. She sees herself as Brahmā, the fountain source of many. She stands in the midst of a funeral pyre in which the world was reduced to ashes in the previous *kalpa*. The seeds of the previous manifestations germinate here. She it is who severs the eternal into many. Then the Goddess appears as Ṣoḍaśī, complete in sixteen *kalās* or phases of Śakti to give shape to her wishes. The wish descends through five senses of perceptions, *viz.*, sound, touch, form, taste and smell and hence the conception of five gods found along with the Goddess. Then the Śakti further descends to assume names and forms and is then known as Bhuvaneśvarī, who is the Goddess of the world phenomenon. She stands for the forces that will constitute the material world. The Śakti then appears in each unit of creation so that the process of multiplication may continue unhampered. She is then known as Bhairavī, I require this, I want that, etc. etc. She it is who moulds the individual appearances and her pose of bringing about the changes is called Kuṇḍalinī. It is she who takes up each individual self to Śiva from which it comes. Under her influence individuals are running for fulfilment of worldly satisfactions and even for god realisation. To do this the Śakti has to sever herself. This is meant by Chinnamastā. She severs even her head so that the mouth can drink the very blood that comes out of her trunk through the neck. On her either side are two Nāyikās, Ḍākinī and Varṇinī who represent names and forms. All the individuals are so many Chinnamastās. They have their being in the Mother and yet they do not know that they are virtually sucking the life-blood of the Mother. She represents the Śakti by which the Great Mother sacrifices herself for the happiness of her children. She severs her love for the children and feeds them with her own blood. She is unique in both her aspects. In one hand she holds her own head and feeds it with her own blood, which represents that she is turned inwards and is in eternal communion with self-knowledge, here figuratively taken as the head, the crown of creation. Outwardly she is constantly taking up such forms, *e.g.* I am angry, I am thirsty, I want knowledge on the one hand and again she brings about fruition of these desires. The Śakti then further gets down and makes the individuals forgetful of all these and think themselves as quite helpless, afflicted with thirst and hunger and suffering the pangs of birth and death. She is then known as Dhūmavatī, a widow, seated on a chariot on which mounts a crow, cowing eternally demanding this and that. Here the Śakti has reached the nāḍīs of her downward course, and then she turns inwards to carry the individuals steeped in ignorance and misery to a state of bliss. Smarting under pains from Dhūmavatī when the individuals pine for relief, goddess Bagalā revives in them the sense that they are Brahma in essence. She is therefore, represented as holding by one hand the tongue to the Asura, *i.e.* our world-mindedness and belabours the Asura with a mallet in her other hand. She instils a desire in the individuals to shun their worldly propensities andcontrol the loose thoughts that have dragged them downwards. The Goddess appears with a mallet in hand to bring abou the enjoyments of the individuals according to their necessity and also in their proper sequence. The next Mahāvidyā is Mātaṅgī whose steps are like those of an infuriate elephant. Her eyes are rolling under the influence of drink and her movements bespeak of herself as engrossed in her own feelings. She has been called the Dharmapatnī, the eternal consort of Śiva and is running after him to be one with him. In the Dhyānamantra she has been called as the presiding deity of the 'words'. She has been called Mantraśakti, a force that makes the words come true, pervading the universe. Finally the Śakti appears as Kamalā, who represents pure self-consciousness, herself bathing in the calm ocean of happiness. The four elephants pouring ablutions of nectar over her are Knowledge, Wealth, Virtue and Godmindedness. She is herself the enjoyer and the enjoyed. The conscious force thus merges again into consciousness. The work of the Mahāvidyās is going on in this way in the macrocosm and and the microcosm and is flinging the creation to a state of stern materialism and then again absorving the same within herself.

CHAPTER XVII

BUDDHIST TANTRAS

A treatise on Tantras will be incomplete without an account of Buddhist Tantras As already mentioned, the origin of the Tantras dates back to ancient times, much earlier than the period when Buddhist ideas came to dominate. It has been accepted by the historians and oriental scholars as well that Tantric doctrines supported with *mantras* and *maṇḍalas* prevailed during the life-time of Buddha It has been recorded that Buddha was himself against all miraculous and mysterious feats, but he had to yield to some extent to public considerations for mantras, which were believed to be endowed with such power that nothing was impossible with them on their proper application. According to the famous logician Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla Buddha gave instructions on *mantras* to persons who were not keen after *nirvāṇa* but aspired after worldly happiness and prosperity. Later on, this element of mysticism in the Buddhist cult produced a rift in the Buddhist camp and was the direct cause of the introduction of mysticism in Buddhism which later on developed into Mahāyāna and subsequently into Vajrayāna.

Primitive Buddhism made common ground with the primitive Sāṅkhya in its analysis of the means of the extinction of misery. It however differed in one important respect from the Sāṅkhya school of thought. While Sāṅkhya considered the nature of the universal phenomenon to be permanent, Buddha preached *Kṣaṇikavāda*, the substance of which is : All are temporary, momentary, all encompass miseries, sorrow ; all are symbolic of ego ; all are void. The whole universe is in a state of flux both from the subjective and objective points of view. According to Buddha, the external world has no existence. Herein there is close similarity between Buddhism and Vedānta. The body and the senses are all unreal. But there is marked distinction in other respects. While Vedānta accepts the existence of Ātmā transcending the world phenomenon, Buddhism urges that the human mind is virtually a chain of consciousness which undergoes changes in quick succession, one idea yielding place to the next one as it occupies the mental plane. As a result of the play and interaction of these ideas, new conceptions, qualities and conformations came into existence and these are the direct cause of re-births and the accompanying cycles of miseries. A sentient Being can only avert this on attainment of *nirvāṇa* after a graduated course of purification by strictly observing the eightfold path. While Sāṅkhya considers emancipation attainable on a termination of connection between Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Buddha while advocating the attainment of *nirvāṇa* as the goal urges that the Puruṣa even in that case is subject to world phenomenon and remains in the shape of seeds which would sprout forth on the fulfilment of the requisite conditions for their germination. Buddha thought that all phenomena are unreal inasmuch as they are the effects of certain causes and conditions, the effect existing in the nascent form in the very cause. Buddha himself wrote a complete Sūtra literature *viz.*, Prajñā Pāramitā which is another name of Śūnya-vāda. He explained that man is a composition of five elements, *viz.*, matter, feeling conception, experience and *vijñāna*. Just as water, molasses and the very seed of wine when mixed together brew wine, so these five come together by force of their previous action and form different human beings.

After the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha, divergence of views appeared within a century or two among his followers. While the Sthaviras (the old) insisted on a strict observance of the rules and regulations for the members of the Saṅgha, in rigid conformity with the teachings of Buddha, a younger generation arose which rebelled against those disciplinary measures as regards diet, conduct, morals, celibacy, etc., and strongly demanded relaxation of rules, their idea being that salvation lay in only leading a normal life. Limited in number, they went on preaching their new gospel in secret and spread their ideas among the populace in the shape of songs, which in spirit were diametrically opposite to the teachings of Buddha. These ideas spread from Gurus to disciples.

Buddhism in its original form was rather self-centred with no consideration for others. The very world being temporary in character, the Sādhaka was only concerned with the thought how he would disentangle himself from the meshes of re-births and miseries. But the Indian people being naturally inclined towards spiritualism, this idea could not predominate for a long time. Shortly the idea of Karuṇā, *i.e.*, compassion for the beings of the world afflicted with miseries possessed the mind of the followers of

Buddhism In course of time this doctrine of Karuṇā made a strong appeal to public mind. The idea of *maitrī* (brotherhood) also gained ground. The Buddhists no more put crudence to the dictum that Buddha himself was in a position to give salvation to the people. They thought that they should even sacrifice themselves, their happiness, their family and children, for the emancipation of the common people steeped in ignorance and suffering innumerable miseries. The object of their worship also began to undergo transformations. Avalokiteśvara, who is all-compassionate in attitude, who would not himself rest in his infinite mercy unless and until the whole universe is delivered, came to be the object of their worship and they would likewise gladly suffer the pangs of births and rebirths till their purpose is not achieved. An ardent *bodhisattva*,[1] however, by living a life of love and meditation with a determination to diffuse right knowledge among the people blinded with ignorance obtained omniscience. In this stage the *bodhisattva* had no more to make for spiritual exercises for *nirvāṇa* but would devote himself for the spiritual upliftment of humanity.

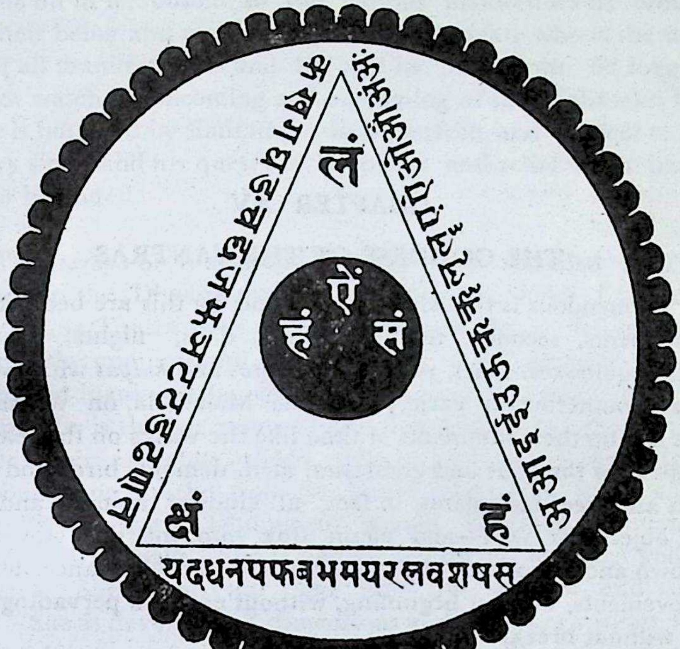
It was no wonder that people dedicating themselves in this way were looked upon with regard by the people. And such was the veneration and gratitude that the men of world cherished for them that even if some followers posing themselves as *bodhisattva* would take alcoholic drinks or be found in the company of women, or commit acts for which ordinary men have to live in perdition, they were not censured at all. Their frailties were connived at in consideration of the high service they were rendering to society. Later on, a further modification about the theory of *karuṇā* took place. A Sādhaka had not to live the life of a monk or *bodhisattva* (meaning a follower of Mahāyāna cult) to receive such veneration from the public. A mere vow taken before a priest to liberate the suffering humanity was considered sufficient for a *bodhisattvahood*, and later on this vow even degraded to mere convention or a pious wish. And under cloak of this vow, formally made or not, all sort of crimes and debauchery were perpetuated in the name of religion.

The conception of *mahāsukha* formed another wedge which hastened another split in the rank of the Buddhists. Buddha in his teachings referred to Nirvāṇa to be the goal which humanity should strive for. The idea of Karuṇā commingled with Śūnya or voidness gave *mahāsukha,* which is a state of eternal bliss that a Sādhaka attains when he is merged with Śūnyatā or identifies himself with the same. It is just like self-melting in the universal self, like salt losing its entity in a mass of water. Śūnya which when it ordinarily means negation is stated to be 'neither existence, nor non-existence, nor a combination of the two nor a negation of the two'. It is the absolute which transcends human faculties and embraces the whole universe. Everything, according to Vijñānavāda, being of transitory nature neither Bhāva (existence) nor Abhāva (non-existence) could be stated to be existent. Hence comes the conception that they must be coupled together. Śūnya and Karuṇā were supposed in like manner to be joined together in union, and a *yogi* who can control his mind and heart and who realises this union after purifying himself physically and mentally enjoys immense joy. This union is the beginning of Tantrism in Buddhism and has been symbolised by deities in embrace. In some Buddhist Tantras (Yoga Tantra and Anuttara Yogatantra) all gods are represented as embracing their Śaktis and feeling the bliss of *nirvāṇa* and *mahāsukha* too. This idea of deities in embrace is thus a feature of Buddhist Tantras and this has gained such strength that all gods and goddesses, appearing nude and lustful are conceived to be of Buddhist origin.

Under this conception of *mahāsukha,* Śūnyavāda of Buddha received a new orientation. Śūnya was no more accepted as a meaningless void. The new conception was that the idea of mere Śūnya or Aśūnya was as much untenable as their abandonment, for both of these attitudes led to false constructions. The primitive Śūnya (voidness) thus came to be associated with consciousness. It was called Prājña which is unchanging, absolute, desireless, stainless, without a beginning or an end like the sky. The new idea of Śūnya thus closely confirmed to the Hindu idea of Śivam, Satyam (all-existence) and Advaitam (without a second). Karuṇā or Kṛpā (cf. Śakti of Śiva) is the force that seeks welfare of all creatures of the universe. Both being absolute or infinite are virtually united in one. When they are differentiated, there is the world phenomenon, but when they are united in one, there is neither the known nor the knowledge, nor the object of knowledge. There is no receiver, no giver, nor any object to be given or taken. And this ts *mahāsukha,* the highest truth. This state is at the root of attainment of the various *siddhis* (occult powers).

The Śūnyavāda as originally preached by Buddha thus became a moot point of contention among the Buddhist thinkers. Different interpretations given to the word 'Śūnya' have been responsible for different schools of philosophy. The Vaibhāṣika school of Buddhist philosophy accepts the external and internal worlds (the objective and subjective worlds) as both existent. The Sautrāntikas, however, consider that the external world has no separate existence of its own ; it is only the projection of the internal world. The *yogācāryas* do not again accept the existence of both the external and internal worlds ; what they urge being *vijñāna-vāda* which presupposes that in addition to Śūnya there is a positive element of idea in its singularity in contrast to past and future idea to which no reality can be vouchsafed. A chain of ideas runs without cessation giving rise to positive idea (Ālaya-vijñāna). Maitreyanāth introduced the idea of consciousness, Prajñā along with Śūnya. His book, *viz.*, Prajñāpāramitā is to this date the standard work of yogācāra. The last school of thought is known as Madhyamakas who are Śūnyavādins. On the expulsion of the Mahāsaṅghikas on account of their departure from the rigorous observance of the Saṅgha, a distinct fissure took place, on which the Buddhists were divided into two groups, *viz.*, Mahāyānists and Hīnayānists. Those who upheld Buddha's instructions to the letter were termed Hīnayānists while those who broke away from the Saṅgha were on account of their superior number and growing popularity called the Mahāyānists. The real significance of the two terms, however, seems to be that Hīnayānists consider pure and simple voidness as the ultimate goal of realisation (*Hīna*=Bereft) and Mahāyānists though subscribing to the original Śūnyavāda, nevertheless superimpose on its glories and manifestations bespeaking of eternal bliss (*Mahā*=Glorified).

Hīnayānists continued to tread the path shown by Buddha as regards the realisation of Śūnyatā. They did not lay any stress on Tantric practices as obtaining in those days even among the Buddhists. The Mahāyānists, however, more eager for worldly happiness and prosperity, took up seriously Buddha's instructions on Mantras, Mudrās, Dhāraṇīs (for the benefit of those unable to study or meditate upon subtle things), Yoga and Samādhi. Tantric Buddhism is the outcome of their Sādhanā in this line. Mahāyāna orthodoxy in its turn yielded place to Vajrayāna which discarded all evil and immoral practices prevailing among Mahāyānists and showed easy paths leading to salvation. It also spoke of the merit



Sahasrāra

from that Sahasrāra. He gains emancipation. Nothing on earth can bind him. All sorts of yogic powers dwell in him. All his Karma Saṁskāras being destroyed, he is subject neither to birth nor to death.

CHAPTER XV

THE GODDESS OF THE TANTRAS

Tremendous is the wheeling of Time; by this are being created the moments, seconds, minutes, hours, days, nights, fortnights, months, equinoxes, years, *yugas*, *manvantaras* and *kalpas* with ever new events as numerous in variety. But the Mahākāla, on whose broad breast rise up these fragments of time like the waves on the sea bringing into view the gods and goddesses, men, demons, birds and beasts, insects and trees and plants, in fact, all kinds of animate and inanimate objects as well—and again sink into the deep abyss quite unknown and unnoticed, is perfectly placid in countenance, devoid of all movements, without beginning, without end and pervading everything without break.

Man is overwhelmed with the glories of the manifested world and the various sensations that proceed from it. But the shadow of Death is lurking everywhere. While man is struting about puffed with *ahaṁkāra* and engrossed with his own enjoyments, Death opens his fearful mouth from all quarters and is slowly and yet surely devouring his belongings one by one and even his own self. The eternal problem of man is how to get out of the coils of mortality that bind him so fast on all sides.

Philosophy is silent here. Its gaze cannot penetrate behind the deep dark curtain of Death. It is Tantra which illumines this tragic void and shows the path to immorality to the distracted and perplexed humanity. Its great message rings solemnly in the midst of veritable ignorance that engulfs the world today. Its message is this. If you hanker after immortality and intensely desire to be saved once for all from the depredations of time, then do not be overwhelmed with the sensations received from the objective world which assumes new shapes and figures every moment of your life with the rolling of time. Keep your mental eyes ever rivetted at the lotus-feet of the Mahāśakti who activates the Mahākāla lying at Her feet. Just as the scintillating outburst of a fire-work derives its very existence and glitter from the gun-powder within it or just as a lamp draws its light from the oil in its bosom, so the various manifestations around us have their being and movement in this Mahāśakti who is the neutral zone of all manifestations and life and its possessions. So long man does not watch the incoming and outcoming of this Mahāśakti in life, his life is bounded by limitations, is imperfect and subject to death at every step, and his quest for happiness and relief from bondage will not be ended.

The *svarūpa* of the Mahāśakti has been revealed in Tantric texts and in the Dhyāna mantras of the Ādyā Śakti Kālikā. The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra says on this point that she is the great progenitor of the minutest and biggest things in the universe—both the animate and inanimate beings. This universe is begotten of Her free will. She is the beginning of all. The Vidyās and the Trinity—all owe their existence to Her. She is cognisant of the entire universe but none in the universe knows Her. She is Kālī, Tārā, Ṣoḍaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Dhūmavatī, Bagalā, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Mātaṅgī and Kamalā. She is surrounded on all sides by gods and goddesses. She is at the same time the grossest and subtlest matter. She is devoid of all dimensions and yet takes various forms. For the fulfilment of desires of the Sādhakas, She assumes various forms. She appears at times to destroy the Asuras and assumes four hands and occasionally two, six, eight, ten or thousand hands. She wears various weapons for the maintenance of Her world. She is the great Mother who being propitiated all gods and goddesses are propitiated. She is Ānanda itself. It is a State of eternal bliss which cannot be conceived by mind or words. When Para Brahma or Mahākāla is desirous of creating the universe, the objective world emerges from Him through the seven centres of realisation or cakras. He is ever-existence, pervades all and resides in all after emcompassing them. He is unchanging in all forms, unattached and is the conscious element. He does not eat, does not move, does not smell. though it is through His instrumentality that Prakṛti is in action, the eyes see, the ear hears, the nose smells, the mind works and so on. He is the Śivatattva as mentioned in the Ācamana Mantra which is to be uttered by the Tantric worshipper in commencing his daily worship, just after Ātmatattva which refers to the individual souls experiencing duality. Mahāśakti is a Mahāyoginī connecting the links of creation, preservation and destruction and at the will of Mahākāla She creates the universe, preserves it and destroys it with all its animate and inanimate objects. The destructive force is one of Her aspects. As she destroys Mahākāla at the time of *Pralaya*, She is called Kālī. She is worshipped as Ādyā, as She is beginning of all. After *mahāpralaya* She alone remains as Tama or Avyakta Prakṛti in a state inconceivable by words or mind. Though formless She assumes various forms ; though without beginning She is the origin of all. She is the Great Creator, Protector and Destroyer and Commander of all.

The Dhyāna mantras which are many are unanimous in describing Her as in a state of eternal bliss and playing in the bosom of Śiva. Her feet do not rest on anything except the breast of Śiva. She resides in the cremation ground—where all the worldly objects are being reduced to ashes—their seed stage. By her independent will she begets the universe with all its diversifications, and again sucks them to Her breast in the twinkling of an eye. Unobstructed is Her motion and multifarious is Her disport. She is black in colour which means that all contradictions like black and white, cold and heat, possible, and impossible, birth and death merge at Her feet. Yet there is an unsurpassed hallow about Her that does not dazzle the eyes, rather She appears as cool and appealing as the light of million moons brought together. She is ridden on a corpse (*i.e.*, exists in all inanimate objects) and is yet *mahābhimā* (*i.e.*, unattached as the sky and the abode of all energy). She has got terrible teeth, yet she is conferring boons to all. She is open-mouthed and yet most affectionate to Her children, bearing as She does in Her bosom all their belongings—physical, mental and spiritual. She has a laughing attitude, yet engrossed in wielding the terrible Spirit of Time. She possesses three eyes with which She can peep through the immeasurable Present, Past and Future. She carries in one of Her hands a skull which is the receptacle of the Unseen and the seeds of the universe. She bears in another hand a cutting instrument which breaks the seeds and puts them in full bloom in the form of the universe. Her hair is dishevelled, *i.e.*, She is beyond all bondage and Her outspreading tongue lusciously sucks the blood coming out of the either corner of her fearful mouth. She wears a necklace of letters which are no other than the Mātrikā Śaktis which constitute the universe and give it a shape. She is also described as being in a destructive mood standing on the bosom of Śiva with a garland of severed hands around Her girdle in a cremation ground resounding with the howling of jackals and yet She wears in Her neck the heads of all She destroys in the shape of a garland. She is neither the knower nor the non-knower. She is Ānandamayī where both positivity and negativity meet.

Such is the Goddess the Tantras have revealed to the world. She is to be worshipped by all seeking perfect self-abnegation, though She in her immense mercy showers the highest benedictions on the worshippers. To attain this the devotee must be free from all passions, fear, anger, and indifferent to pleasure and pain, gain and loss, respect and insult and must reach a stage of self-realisation where he can exclaim in wonder शिवोऽहम् (I am identifiable with Śiva). It is thus the Tantras uphold the highest teachings of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads and yet bring us face to face with our Creator (Mahākāli), Preserver (Mahālakṣmī) and Destroyer (Mahāsarasvatī) who are but the different aspects of Ānandamayī Kālikā. The Goddess Mahākālī is the direct cause of the objective world and is essentially the creative principle. The Goddess Mahālakṣmī is directly responsible for the sensations and feelings that play in the heart of all and is the preserving and sustaining principle while the Goddess Mahāsarasvatī converts the feelings to *saṁskāras* or experiences in the shape of letters or words, and all thoughts and desires which arising in our heart move us to action proceed from Her in never-ending cycles. The Goddess Kālikā, or Ānandamayī as She has been called, residing in the heart of Mahākāla (the Eternal Time), at her independent will appears as Mahākāli, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī to fulfil Her sport of Creation, Preservation and Destruction. She herself becomes these Goddesses and absorbs them in Her at the time of universal dissolution. She is Herself the Maker of the universe and its constituent. There is nothing outside Her. She is the Brahma of the Upaniṣads and yet established in Her own glory. She is therefore worshipped in both aspects, *viz.*, as the bestower of all possessions of life and also as the mighty Śakti that gives us *Kaivalya*, *i.e.*, oneness with Brahma. Our obeisance to Her, the Embodiment of Rasa !

CHAPTER XVI

THE TEN MAHĀVIDYĀS

The most important goddesses of the Tantra are the ten Mahāvidyās, *viz.*, Kālī, Tārā, Ṣoḍaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Dhūmavatī, Bagalā, Mātaṅgī and Kamalā. They are worshipped by the Tantrics for the sake of various spiritual attainments. They are, in fact, the manifestations of Śakti or the Great Mother in the process of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. It is said that on the eve of sacrifice to be performed by Dakṣa, mention of which has been made in an earlier chapter, Satī his daughter, married Śiva dwelling on the summits of Kailāsa, expressed a desire to her consort to attend the sacrifice, though uninvited. Śiva advised her not to go there under the circumstances. But all remonstrances failed to persuade her to stay in Kailāsa. When she saw that even all her entreaties did not move Śiva, she assumed the dreadful figure of goddes Kālī. Śiva was greatly frightened. He tried to escape from her in fear and whichever direction he turned, he found his way blocked by the goddesses of unknown forms and appearances inspiring fear. Overcome with apprehension Śiva searched for Sati, his consort. Then the goddess Kālī addressing Śiva in a soft tone said, "Mahādeva, how could you forget that I am your mother, as well that of Viṣṇu and Brahmā ? While you were lying in the Kāraṇa-Śarīra (the primordial water in which the cosmic egg is laid), it was at my will that you became engaged in deep meditation as regards the creation of the universe. Then I, assuming the appearance of a corpse went floating to all of you one by one. Viṣṇu, unable to bear the foul smell of the corpse, hastily left the place ; Brahmā also turned his face to the four cardinal points in disgust. It was only you that instead of expressing any hateful attitude at my sight, took the corpse in your breast. Then pleased with you I, as Prakṛti, chose you as the Puruṣa. In this way we two have come together as Śiva and Śakti." Hearing this, Mahādeva was relieved of all fears, and Mahāmāyā withdrew the ten goddesses who are known by the name of Mahāvidyās or Siddhavidyās. Needless to say that after this Śiva did not prevent Satī from proceeding to her father's sacrifice.

We have already discussed the chief of the Mahāvidyās, *viz.*, Kālī. We, therefore, give below a short account of the other Mahāvidyās, in the order they are mentioned in the Tantras.

Tārā—Tārā is of dark blue complexion whereas Kālī, already mentioned, is of dark colour, as sombre as the clouds at the time of universal dissolution. Tārā places her left leg on the breast of Śiva, who lies like a corpse. She is of short stature with a protruding bell. She has a terrible appearance and she is dressed in tiger-skin. She wears on her neck a garland of severed human heads. She is in the prime of her youth and adorned with *Pañcamudrās*. She is possessed of four hands and her tongue is held out a bit. She wears a single braid of matted hair on her head. The Ṛṣi Akṣobhya resides in her forehead. Her complexion is as effulgent as that of the newly rising sun. She is three-eyed. She stands in the midst of a funeral pyre. The range of her teeth is terrible. She is laughing, engrossed in her emotion, and she is decked with ornaments worn by the women. She takes her stand on a white lotus in the midst of a wide expanse of water.

Ṣoḍaśi—She is the third Mahāvidyā and is as resplendent as the newly rising sun. She is also three-eyed. She holds in her four hands noose, goad, arrow and bow. She is seated on a pedestal comprising of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra. Īśvara (Indra) and Sadāśiva and the altar on which she takes her seat is Śiva himself. On the altar is Mahākāla with whom the Mahāvidyā sports in joy.

Bhuvaneśvarī—Her complexion is that of the risen sun. She possesses a crescent on her forehead and a crown over her head. Her breasts are full and surcharged with milk. She is three-eyed and her face is ever lit up with smile. In her two hands she holds the noose and the goad and in the other two the pose of granting boons and assurances to her devotees.

Bhairavi—The fifth Mahāvidyā Bhairavī is reddish like the morning sun. She is dressed in a silken cloth and wears a garland of heads on her neck. Her breast is anointed with gore. In her four hands she holds a rosary of beads, a book, and the poses of granting boons and assurances. She has a crescent on her forehead. Her three eyes are as beautiful as red lotuses. There is a bejewelled crown over her head. A mild smile plays on her lips.

Chinnamastā—The Sādhaka should concentrate his mind on a pure and fully blown lotus in the region of the navel. Within it is the solar region red as hibiscus and surrounded by three lines, *viz*, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Within that region is the Goddess Chinnamastā who is also effulgent as tens of millions of suns together. Her mouth is expansive, terrible to look at, with tongue emitting out. The Goddess is drinking the blood that gushes forth from her throats. Her hair is dishevelled and beautified with many varieties of flowers. In her right hand she holds a cutting instrument and wears a garland of human heads on her neck. She is naked and of fearful appearance. Her right leg is in front while her left leg is a little behind. The Goddess Chinnamastā wears a garland of bones and a serpent in the shape of a sacred thread. She is on a standing posture of Rati and Kāma who are in the attitude of sexual embrace. Her appearance is that of a woman of sixteen years with heavy and rising breasts. On the left and right hand side of the Goddess are two *nāyikās* called *Ḍākinī* and *Varṇinī*. The Varṇinī on the right hand side of the Goddess is red in complexion, naked and with dishevelled hair. In her left hand is the severed head of a man, in her right hand a cutter, and she wears a sacrificial thread made of serpent. She is of a glowing splendour. Her right leg is in front and her left leg, a little behind. She is also of sixteen years of age and bedecked with various ornaments, and a garland of bones. The effulgence of Ḍākinī on the left side of the goddess is like that of the sun at the termination of the Kalpa, resplendent like fire, and her matted hairs sparkle like lightning. This Ḍākinī is of three eyes, her rows of teeth are white, face looks terrible in view of her frightful teeth and her breasts are heavy and prominent. This Ḍākinī is of very fearful countenance, of dishevelled hair and naked. Her protruding tongue is big. She puts on a garland of human heads on her neck, and holds a human skull in her lefr hand and a cutter in her right hand. She also quaffs the blood gushing out in another stream from the neck of the Goddess. Both Varṇinī and Ḍākinī are serving the Goddess.

Dhūmavatī—Dhūmavatī is pale in complexion, is ever moving, stern and of tall stature. Her cloth is also dirty, her hair is disorderly and colourless, she is without teeth and her breasts are hanging. She is in the garb of a widow and rides a chariot over which sits a crow. Her two eyes are stern without sight of tenderness. In one of her hands she has a winnowing fan and her other hand is in the attitude of granting boons. Her nose is big, and the body and eye crooked. She is afflicted with hunger and thirst, of terrible mien and of quarrelsome nature.

Bagalā—The Goddess Bagalā is seated on a throne placed on an altar beset with gems in a *maṇḍapa* be-spangled with gems in the midst of an ocean of nectar. She is of yellow countenance and puts on a yellow-coloured cloth. She is adorned all over with garlands and ornaments. She holds in one of her hands a mace and in the other the tongue of enemy. The Goddess holding the tip of the tongue of the enemy in her left hand, belabours him with a mace taken up in her right hand. She has two hands and is covered all over in yellow.

Mātaṇgī—The Goddess is of dark complexion, with a crescent on her forehead, and has three eyes. In her four hands she holds the sword, *Kheṭaka*, noose and goad. The Goddess is seated on a throne made of precious stones.

Kamalā—The complexion of the Goddess is as bright as gold. Four elephants resembling four hillocks of gold are coronating the Goddess by holding four pitchers containing nectar with their trunks. In her four hands she holds two lotuses and shows postures of granting boons and assurances. Her head is decked with begemmed crown. She wears a silk cloth and is seated on a lotus.

The ten Mahāvidyās represent the *seven* stages in which Śakti manifests herself and the *three* stages in which she withdraws creation in Herself. The descriptions given above are in cryptic language and do not seem to be of much significance to the common people. We have already explained what is meant by certain terms in a previous section. Studied in that light, the above descriptions will offer much valuable hints on spiritual matters. Our ideas, conceptions and perceptions are always undergoing changes. Is there no law in the formation and dissolution of these ideas ? The Tantras offer a new illumination on this abstruse matter. With the help of the ten Mahavidyās, they show that it is consciousness that holds our actions and directs them in accordance with our feelings and realisations. When one understands these ten classifications of Śakti, it becomes easy for him to see that pure consciousness governs all objects, whether animate or inanimate.

Kālī is pure ecstacy, a feeling of perfect satisfaction. There is no question of such a thing that this much I have got and this much I require. She is above all senses of positivity and negativity. When She first awakens with the sense of positivity, She becomes

Tārā. She sees herself as Brahmā, the fountain source of many. She stands in the midst of a funeral pyre in which the world was reduced to ashes in the previous *kalpa*. The seeds of the previous manifestations germinate here. She it is who severs the eternal into many. Then the Goddess appears as Ṣoḍaśī, complete in sixteen *kalās* or phases of Śakti to give shape to her wishes. The wish descends through five senses of perceptions, *viz.*, sound, touch, form, taste and smell and hence the conception of five gods found along with the Goddess. Then the Śakti further descends to assume names and forms and is then known as Bhuvaneśvarī, who is the Goddess of the world phenomenon. She stands for the forces that will constitute the material world. The Śakti then appears in each unit of creation so that the process of multiplication may continue unhampered. She is then known as Bhairavī, I require this, I want that, etc. etc. She it is who moulds the individual appearances and her pose of bringing about the changes is called Kuṇḍalinī. It is she who takes up each individual self to Śiva from which it comes. Under her influence individuals are running for fulfilment of worldly satisfactions and even for god realisation. To do this the Śakti has to sever herself. This is meant by Chinnamastā. She severs even her head so that the mouth can drink the very blood that comes out of her trunk through the neck. On her either side are two Nāyikās, Ḍākinī and Varṇinī who represent names and forms. All the individuals are so many Chinnamastās. They have their being in the Mother and yet they do not know that they are virtually sucking the life-blood of the Mother. She represents the Śakti by which the Great Mother sacrifices herself for the happiness of her children. She severs her love for the children and feeds them with her own blood. She is unique in both her aspects. In one hand she holds her own head and feeds it with her own blood, which represents that she is turned inwards and is in eternal communion with self-knowledge, here figuratively taken as the head, the crown of creation. Outwardly she is constantly taking up such forms, *e.g.* I am angry, I am thirsty, I want knowledge on the one hand and again she brings about fruition of these desires. The Śakti then further gets down and makes the individuals forgetful of all these and think themselves as quite helpless, afflicted with thirst and hunger and suffering the pangs of birth and death. She is then known as Dhūmavatī, a widow, seated on a chariot on which mounts a crow, cowing eternally demanding this and that. Here the Śakti has reached the nāḍīs of her downward course, and then she turns inwards to carry the individuals steeped in ignorance and misery to a state of bliss. Smarting under pains from Dhūmavatī when the individuals pine for relief, goddess Bagalā revives in them the sense that they are Brahma in essence. She is therefore, represented as holding by one hand the tongue to the Asura, *i.e.* our world-mindedness and belabours the Asura with a mallet in her other hand. She instils a desire in the individuals to shun their worldly propensities andcontrol the loose thoughts that have dragged them downwards. The Goddess appears with a mallet in hand to bring abou the enjoyments of the individuals according to their necessity and also in their proper sequence. The next Mahāvidyā is Mātaṅgī whose steps are like those of an infuriate elephant. Her eyes are rolling under the influence of drink and her movements bespeak of herself as engrossed in her own feelings. She has been called the Dharmapatnī, the eternal consort of Śiva and is running after him to be one with him. In the Dhyānamantra she has been called as the presiding deity of the 'words'. She has been called Mantraśakti, a force that makes the words come true, pervading the universe. Finally the Śakti appears as Kamalā, who represents pure self-consciousness, herself bathing in the calm ocean of happiness. The four elephants pouring ablutions of nectar over her are Knowledge, Wealth, Virtue and Godmindedness. She is herself the enjoyer and the enjoyed. The conscious force thus merges again into consciousness. The work of the Mahāvidyās is going on in this way in the macrocosm and and the microcosm and is flinging the creation to a state of stern materialism and then again absorving the same within herself.

CHAPTER XVII

BUDDHIST TANTRAS

A treatise on Tantras will be incomplete without an account of Buddhist Tantras. As already mentioned, the origin of the Tantras dates back to ancient times, much earlier than the period when Buddhist ideas came to dominate. It has been accepted by the historians and oriental scholars as well that Tantric doctrines supported with *mantras* and *maṇḍalas* prevailed during the life-time of Buddha. It has been recorded that Buddha was himself against all miraculous and mysterious feats, but he had to yield to some extent to public considerations for mantras, which were believed to be endowed with such power that nothing was impossible with them on their proper application. According to the famous logician Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla Buddha gave instructions on *mantras* to persons who were not keen after *nirvāṇa* but aspired after worldly happiness and prosperity. Later on, this element of mysticism in the Buddhist cult produced a rift in the Buddhist camp and was the direct cause of the introduction of mysticism in Buddhism which later on developed into Mahāyāna and subsequently into Vajrayāna.

Primitive Buddhism made common ground with the primitive Sāṅkhya in its analysis of the means of the extinction of misery. It however differed in one important respect from the Sāṅkhya school of thought. While Sāṅkhya considered the nature of the universal phenomenon to be permanent, Buddha preached *Kṣaṇikavāda*, the substance of which is: All are temporary, momentary, all encompass miseries, sorrow; all are symbolic of ego; all áre void. The whole universe is in a state of flux both from the subjective and objective points of view. According to Buddha, the external world has no existence. Herein there is close similarity between Buddhism and Vedānta. The body and the senses are all unreal. But there is marked distinction in other respects. While Vedānta accepts the existence of Ātmā transcending the world phenomenon, Buddhism urges that the human mind is virtually a chain of consciousness which undergoes changes in quick succession, one idea yielding place to the next one as it occupies the mental plane. As a result of the play and interaction of these ideas, new conceptions, qualities and conformations came into existence and these are the direct cause of re-births and the accompanying cycles of miseries. A sentient Being can only avert this on attainment of *nirvāṇa* after a graduated course of purification by strictly observing the eightfold path. While Sāṅkhya considers emancipation attainable on a termination of connection between Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Buddha while advocating the attainment of *nirvāṇa* as the goal urges that the Puruṣa even in that case is subject to world phenomenon and remains in the shape of seeds which would sprout forth on the fulfilment of the requisite conditions for their germination. Buddha thought that all phenomena are unreal inasmuch as they are the effects of certain causes and conditions, the effect existing in the nascent form in the very cause. Buddha himself wrote a complete Sūtra literature *viz.*, Prajñā Pāramitā which is another name of Śūnya-vāda. He explained that man is a composition of five elements, *viz.*, matter, feeling conception, experience and *vijñāna.* Just as water, molasses and the very seed of wine when mixed together brew wine, so these five come together by force of their previous action and form different human beings.

After the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha, divergence of views appeared within a century or two among his followers. While the Sthaviras (the old) insisted on a strict observance of the rules and regulations for the members of the Saṅgha, in rigid conformity with the teachings of Buddha, a younger generation arose which rebelled against those disciplinary measures as regards diet, conduct, morals, celibacy, etc., and strongly demanded relaxation of rules, their idea being that salvation lay in only leading a normal life. Limited in number, they went on preaching their new gospel in secret and spread their ideas among the populace in the shape of songs, which in spirit were diametrically opposite to the teachings of Buddha. These ideas spread from Gurus to disciples.

Buddhism in its original form was rather self-centred with no consideration for others. The very world being temporary in character, the Sādhaka was only concerned with the thought how he would disentangle himself from the meshes of re-births and miseries. But the Indian people being naturally inclined towards spiritualism, this idea could not predominate for a long time. Shortly the idea of Karuṇā, *i.e.*, compassion for the beings of the world afflicted with miseries possessed the mind of the followers of

Buddhism In course of time this doctrine of Karuṇā made a strong appeal to public mind. The idea of *maitrī* (brotherhood) also gained ground. The Buddhists no more put crudence to the dictum that Buddha himself was in a position to give salvation to the people. They thought that they should even sacrifice themselves, their happiness, their family and children, for the emancipation of the common people steeped in ignorance and suffering innumerable miseries. The object of their worship also began to undergo transformations. Avalokiteśvara, who is all-compassionate in attitude, who would not himself rest in his infinite .mercy unless and until the whole universe is delivered, came to be the object of their worship and they would likewise gladly suffer the pangs of births and rebirths till their purpose is not achieved. An ardent *bodhisattva*,[1] however, by living a life of love and meditation with a determination to diffuse right knowledge among the people blinded with ignorance obtained omniscience. In this stage the *bodhisattva* had no more to make for spiritual exercises for *nirvāṇa* but would devote himself for the spiritual upliftment of humanity.

It was no wonder that people dedicating themselves in this way were looked upon with regard by the people. And such was the veneration and gratitude that the men of world cherished for them that even if some followers posing themselves as *bodhisattva* would take alcoholic drinks or be found in the company of women, or commit acts for which ordinary men have to live in perdition, they were not censured at all. Their frailties were connived at in consideration of the high service they were rendering to society. Later on, a further modification about the theory of *karuṇā* took place. A Sādhaka had not to live the life of a monk or *bodhisattva* (meaning a follower of Mahāyāna cult) to receive such veneration from the public. A mere vow taken before a priest to liberate the suffering humanity was considered sufficient for a *bodhisattvahood*, and later on this vow even degraded to mere convention or a pious wish. And under cloak of this vow, formally made or not, all sort of crimes and debauchery were perpetuated in the name of religion.

The conception of *mahāsukha* formed another wedge which hastened another split in the rank of the Buddhists. Buddha in his teachings referred to Nirvāṇa to be the goal which humanity should strive for. The idea of Karuṇā commingled with Śūnya or voidness gave *mahāsukha*, which is a state of eternal bliss that a Sādhaka attains when he is merged with Śūnyatā or identifies himself with the same. It is just like self-melting in the universal self, like salt losing its entity in a mass of water. Śūnya which when it ordinarily means negation is stated to be 'neither existence, nor non-existence, nor a combination of the two nor a negation of the two'. It is the absolute which transcends human faculties and embraces the whole universe. Everything, according to Vijñānavāda, being of transitory nature neither Bhāva (existence) nor Abhāva (non-existence) could be stated to be existent. Hence comes the conception that they must be coupled together. Śūnya and Karuṇā were supposed in like manner to be joined together in union, and a *yogi* who can control his mind and heart and who realises this union after purifying himself physically and mentally enjoys immense joy. This union is the beginning of Tantrism in Buddhism and has been symbolised by deities in embrace. In some Buddhist Tantras (Yoga Tantra and Anuttara Yogatantra) all gods are represented as embracing their Śaktis and feeling the bliss of *nirvāṇa* and *mahāsukha* too. This idea of deities in embrace is thus a feature of Buddhist Tantras and this has gained such strength that all gods and goddesses, appearing nude and lustful are conceived to be of Buddhist origin.

Under this conception of *mahāsukha*, Śūnyavāda of Buddha received a new orientation. Śūnya was no more accepted as a meaningless void. The new conception was that the idea of mere Śūnya or Aśūnya was as much untenable as their abandonment, for both of these attitudes led to false constructions. The primitive Śūnya (voidness) thus came to be associated with consciousness. It was called Prājña which is unchanging, absolute, desireless, stainless, without a beginning or an end like the sky. The new idea of Śūnya thus closely confirmed to the Hindu idea of Śivam, Satyam (all-existence) and Advaitam (without a second). Karuṇā or Kṛpā (cf. Śakti of Śiva) is the force that seeks welfare of all creatures of the universe. Both being absolute or infinite are virtually united in one. When they are differentiated, there is the world phenomenon, but when they are united in one, there is neither the known nor the knowledge, nor the object of knowledge. There is no receiver, no giver, nor any object to be given or taken. And this ts *mahāsukha*, the highest truth. This state is at the root of attainment of the various *siddhis* (occult powers).

The Śūnyavāda as originally preached by Buddha thus became a moot point of contention among the Buddhist thinkers. Different interpretations given to the word 'Śūnya' have been responsible for different schools of philosophy. The Vaibhāṣika school of Buddhist philosophy accepts the external and internal worlds (the objective and subjective worlds) as both existent. The Sautrāntikas, however, consider that the external world has no separate existence of its own ; it is only the projection of the internal world. The *yogācāryas* do not again accept the existence of both the external and internal worlds ; what they urge being *vijñāna-vāda* which presupposes that in addition to Śūnya there is a positive element of idea in its singularity in contrast to past and future idea to which no reality can be vouchsafed. A chain of ideas runs without cessation giving rise to positive idea (Ālaya-vijñāna). Maitreyanāth introduced the idea of consciousness, Prajñā along with Śūnya. His book, *viz.*, Prajñāpāramitā is to this date the standard work of yogācāra. The last school of thought is known as Madhyamakas who are Śūnyavādins. On the expulsion of the Mahāsaṅghikas on account of their departure from the rigorous observance of the Saṅgha, a distinct fissure took place, on which the Buddhists were divided into two groups, *viz.*, Mahāyānists and Hīnayānists. Those who upheld Buddha's instructions to the letter were termed Hīnayānists while those who broke away from the Saṅgha were on account of their superior number and growing popularity called the Mahāyānists. The real significance of the two terms, however, seems to be that Hīnayānists consider pure and simple voidness as the ultimate goal of realisation (*Hīna*=Bereft) and Mahāyānists though subscribing to the original Śūnyavāda, nevertheless superimpose on its glories and manifestations bespeaking of eternal bliss (*Mahā*=Glorified).

Hīnayānists continued to tread the path shown by Buddha as regards the realisation of Śūnyatā. They did not lay any stress on Tantric practices as obtaining in those days even among the Buddhists. The Mahāyānists, however, more eager for worldly happiness and prosperity, took up seriously Buddha's instructions on Mantras, Mudrās, Dhāraṇīs (for the benefit of those unable to study or meditate upon subtle things), Yoga and Samādhi. Tantric Buddhism is the outcome of their Sādhanā in this line. Mahāyāna orthodoxy in its turn yielded place to Vajrayāna which discarded all evil and immoral practices prevailing among Mahāyānists and showed easy paths leading to salvation. It also spoke of the merit to be derived by the repetition of *dhāraṇis*. Most of the Tantric literature are the compositions of Vajrayānists called Vajrācāryas who are great in number. Śūnya, as occurring in most of the Tantric texts, is taken in the sense of practice of worldly unattachment. In Vajrayāna the word Vajra, meaning Śūnyatā, is an oft-repeated word. It means *firm* and forms the basis of all. It cannot be soaked, nor can it be cut, pierced nor burnt. It is indestructible, the *ātmā* of the Gītā It is the Vajrayānists who further developed the theory of five Dhyānī Buddhas, *e.g.*, Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi who are deities presiding respectively over Rūpa (matter), Vedanā (feeling), Saṁjñā (conception), Saṁskāra (experience) and Vijñāna (consciousness), which are stages of realisation, as already explained in a previous chapter.

Buddhist literature, properly speaking, is the contribution of Vajrayānist school of thought which sprang up against the laxity of morals among the common rank of Mahāyānists and the craze for cheap *siddhis* or superhuman powers, *i.e.*, moving through the air, entering others' bodies and homes unperceived, gaining shastric knowledge and even conquering enemies through the agency of mantras. It is Vajrayānists who first preached the Tāntric tenets and doctrines in Public and put them in writing. It incorporated the philosophical idea and theories in Buddhism, and even in Hinduism. It included many leading tenets of Mantrayāna, a form of Mahāyāna Buddhism where Mantras, Mudrās, Maṇḍalas, etc., were given prominence. It accepted the theory of five Dhyānī Buddhas and five Śuddha *kulas* from the Mahāyānists. It is this on which the Vajrayānic conception of the Patheon rests. The conception of *mahāsukha* which is the main spring of Buddhist Tantras is due to them. The Vajrayāna thus satisfied the cultured and the uncultured and appealed to the pious and to the sinners who found in it not only the path to deliverance from worldly miseries and freedom from bondage, which is the aim of all Buddhist worshippers, but also a way to eternal bliss.

Vajrayāna deities are Śūnya in essence but are all manifestations of the same. The conception of the image and their external manifestation is based on the aspect of voluntary manifestation of the Śūnyatā and the *bīja mantra*. Even the same deity was worshipped in various forms and colours for different functions. For example, there is a long series of female divinities generally designated by the name of Tārā, such as Khaṇḍirvāṇi Tārā, Mahatśrī Tārā, Varadā Tārā, Jaṅgulī Tārā, Dhanadā Tārā, Śilā Tārā, Mahāśrī, Ekajaṭā Tārā, etc. Again the different forms of Mañjuśrī are Sthiracakra, Mañjughoṣā, etc. Other divinities worshipped are Prajñāpāramitā, Viśvamātā, Marīcī, Sarasvatī etc. The chief among the male deities is Avalokiteśvara in his various manifestations such as Sadākṣarī, Lokeśvarā, Lokanāthā, Vajradhūrmā, etc.

The deities are the different forms of Śakti. For example, Mañjuśrī is the embodiment of the five *skandas viz.*, matter, feeling, conception, experience and consciousness which mingled in various proportions make various types of beings. Over each of them one Dhyānī Buddha presides. When one element among the five *skandas* predominates, the deity is considered to be the emanation of that Dhyānī Buddha which presides over the element in question. When such deity is represented it bears on the head the same Dhyāni Buddha and is considered as his offspring and as belonging to his family. The five. Dhyānī Buddhas are represented only on the aureole over the head of the principal deity.

In Buddhist Tantras the ten planes of spiritual progress are known as Pramuditā, Vimalā, Prabhākarī, Arciṣmatī, Sudurjayā, Abhimukhī, Duraṅgamā, Acalā, Sādhumatī and Dharmamedhyā. The worshipper has to attain the planes by purifying the mind and renunciation of desires He has to shun all ideas of ahaṁkāra (self) and identify himself with the deity he worships and conceive himself as possessing the same form, complexion and powers of the deity. In Yoga philosophy emphasis is laid on *Saṁyama*, which consists in identifying oneself with the object on which mind is concentrated; it is said that by such concentration the worshipper acquires full knowledge of the object. The basis of Buddhist *sādhanā* is thus much the same, and thereby various *siddhis* or superhuman powers are attained.

The *siddhis*, according to the Buddhist Tantras, have been classified as Uttama (Good), Madhyama (Medium) and Adhama (Low). These superhuman powers might have been obtained by some from the date of their birth ; such *siddhis* are called *janmaja*. Some *siddhis* are obtained through the use of drugs ; these are called *auṣadhija*. The *siddhis* won by the practice of mantras or meditation or samādhi have been termed as *mantraja*, *tapoja* and *samādhija* sepectively A worshipper possessed of *uttama siddhis* is what is called an *āptakāma puruṣa*. His desires are fulfilled on mere wish. A worshipper of *madhymā siddhi* is said to be able to commune with the deities, move with ease in the air, enter unperceived into the bodies of others, remove diseases by a single glance, bewitch people, extract poison etc. A person of *adhama siddhi* acquires fame, long life, prosperity, power, children, etc.

Again, even monks of the Tantric period were known to perform the six rites of Śānti, Vaśīkaraṇa, Stambhana, Vidveṣaṇa, Uccāṭana and Māraṇa, meant for curing diseases, subjugating others, forcing others to do particular works, agitating others and separating friends respectively.

The essence of Buddhist mode of worship is this : The Bodhisattva (the follower of Buddhist Tantras) should first regard himself as nothing but a chain of momentary consciousness and ivoke the aid of Śūnya, the Ultimate Reality with its three elements, *viz.*, Śūnya, Vijñāna and Mahāsukha. The aid can be invoked when the mind is identified with Śūnya. This being done, the Śūnya responds in accordance with Bija Mantra. The Śūnya then transforms itself into the form of divinity with which the mind is identified. With the commingling of the Mind with the Deity, the latter does the work for which he is invoked till dismissed. Siddhis are developed in this way. This is also the basis of *sādhanā* as taught in the Hindu Tantras. The worshipper has first to realise the *ātma tattva* and then to identify himself with Śivatattva. This being done, the Śaktitattva manifests herself, as desired by the worshipper. The conception of happiness in Buddhist Tantra, however, differs widely from that in Hindu Tantras. The Buddhist will feel happy to be in the company of Apsarās, to be in the land of Vidyādharas where the Lord of Heaven will hold a parasol over the head of the worshipper, and other gods will attend upon him, while the objective in Hindu Tantras is attainment of pure *ānandam* which is at once the negation of self and Śakti.

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GLOSSARY

Advaita-vāda—The doctrine of the Advaita philosophy which upholds monotheism.
Ahaṁkāra—Aham tattva or the sense of ego.
Anāhata Nāda—See Nāda. A sound which occurs without cessation of itself.
Ānanda—Eternal bliss in which all knowledge of self vanishes.
Āsana—Special postures of sitting for concentrating the mind.
Aṣṭāṅga Yoga—Eight-fold yoga-system.
Beal tree—Quince, yielding spherical fruits full of seeds.
Bhakti Cult—A school of thought that regards devotion as essential for god-realisation.
Bhāvas—Direct experiences of emotions during spiritual exercises. Also temperament.
Bījamantra—A *mantra* in monosyllabic form.
Brahmajñāna—Knowledge of the Absolute.
Buddhi—Mahat Tattva. Intellect.
Cakras—Dynamic centres in the spinal cord where the spiritual energy becomes vitalised.
Citta—A store-house of memories of experiences and feeling.
Cit—The principle of consciousness. cinmaya (mas) Adjective Cinmayī (fem.)
Ḍamaru—A particular kind of musical instrument having two conical ends joined together with a narrow middle.
Divyācāra—Practices by persons of Divya bhāva.
Dvāpara—The third of the four cycles of Time.
Dhyāna—Meditation.
Iḍā—A nerve through the spinal cord by the left side of the Suṣumna.
Jīva—An individual.
Jīvanmukta Puruṣa—A person released from bondage.
Kali Yuga—The fourth and last division in the cycle of Time.
Kāraṇa Śarīra—Causal body.
Karma—Actions in the past and present

Kośas—Sheaths of the body.
Kṛtyā—Works to be done.
Kuṇḍalinī Śakti—This brings about the union of the individual and the Absolute.
Līlā—Sport.
Liṅga Śarīra—Subtle body.
Mahāpralaya—Dissolution of the entire universe.
Mantras—Sacred letters to be recited at the time of spiritual exercise.
Māraṇa—Tantric rite for the destruction of persons
Mārga—Path.
Mudrā - Inter-weaving of fingers. Yogic exercises which render the body immune from diseases.
Nāda—Intermediate between *cit* and *sabda* (sound).
Nāḍī—Nerves.
Nirākāra—Without any material shape.
Nirguṇa—Devoid of attributes
Niṣedha—Prohibitions.
Nyāsa—A yogic process in which the different centres of the body are to be identified with the correponding centres of the Deity.
Paśyacara—Practices by persons with Paśu bhāva.
Piṅgala—A nerve passing through the spinal cord by the right side of the Suṣumnā.
Prakṛti—The creative energy with three attributes, *viz*,. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.
Pralaya—Destruction of a portion of the universe.
Prāṇa—The vital force in all beings.
Prāṇāyāma—Control of vital breaths.
Prāṇapratiṣṭhā—A process by which prāṇa is invoked in the Deity.
Pratyāhāra—Withdrawal of the organs of senses from the objects.
Puruṣa - The consciousness in embodiment, eternal omnipresence.
Pūjā—Form of worship with offerings of flowers, incense, etc.
Rajas—The principle in Prakṛti which leads to activity and desires.
Sādhaka—The worshipper.
Sādhanā—Spiritual exercise.
Saguṇa—With attributes.
Samādhi—Absorption in god-consciousness.
Saṁskāra—Experience of present and past lives.

Śāntikarma—Tantric rites to remove diseases or counteract hostile astral influence.

Sat—All-existence.

Satcakraveda—Rising through the six cakras one by one from Mūlādhāra upwards.

Sattva—The principle of goodness in Prakṛti which tends towards attainments of virtue.

Satya Yuga—The first of the four divisions in the cycle of Time.

Siddhis—Superhuman powers acquired through yogic processes.

Stambhana—Suppression of the function of a faculty by incantation.

Stotra—Hymns.

Sthūla Śarīra—Material body.

Suṣumnā—The chief nerve through which Yogic power works.

Svarūpa—Real nature.

Tamas—The principle of dullness which induces indolence, sleep, etc.

Tanmātrās—Five elemental things, *e.g.*, Ākāśa, Air, Fire, Water and Earth.

Tretā Yuga—The second of the four divisions in the cycle of Time.

Uccāṭana—A Tantric rite to drive away foes or to dislodge persons from homes.

Vaśīkaraṇa—A Tantric rite to bewitch men or animals,

Vidhi—Prescriptions of actions.

Vidveṣaṇa —A Tantric rite by which friends may be separated.

Vīrācāra —Practices by Tantric worshippers with Vīra bhāva.

Viṣāṇa—A musical instrument resembling a horn.

Yantra—A mystic diagram on metals or drawn on earth to represent the Deity at the time of worship.

Yoga—The process of union with God.

Yuga—Ages, divisions of Time.

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KALPACINTĀMAṆIḤ
OF
DĀMODARA BHAṬṬA
TANTRA, YANTRA AND MANTRA

The present book, edited from a rare manuscript, pertains to ancient *tāntric* rites which usually come under the head of *ṣaṭkarman* (sixfold activities) such as (1) Subjugation of persons, (2) Attraction, (3) Immobilization of enemy, fire, snake, etc., (4) Liquidation of enemy, (5) Eradication of enemy from home, (6) Pacification of an evil, or release from captivity. To these is added one more – dissension (*vidveṣaṇa*), creating division among the ranks of the enemy.

The book describes the procedure of these activities. Various alternatives are offered and the aspirant can select any. *Yantras* and *mantra* are quick in effect. The text and translation are self-explanatory. The aspirant need not approach an adept for guidance.

To understand technique, the editor has appended a glossarial Index. He has prefixed an introduction for general guidance. Beside an appendix of 72 Cakras (practical devices) followed by details, the book contains the *akaḍama cakra* which foretells whether the experiment undertaken will come out successful.

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